NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

HISTORY



PARTHENON
THE GLORY OF ATHENS

AMERICA'S RAILROAD
THE RACE TO UNIFY A NATION

VIKINGS IN THE NEW WORLD
500 YEARS BEFORE COLUMBUS

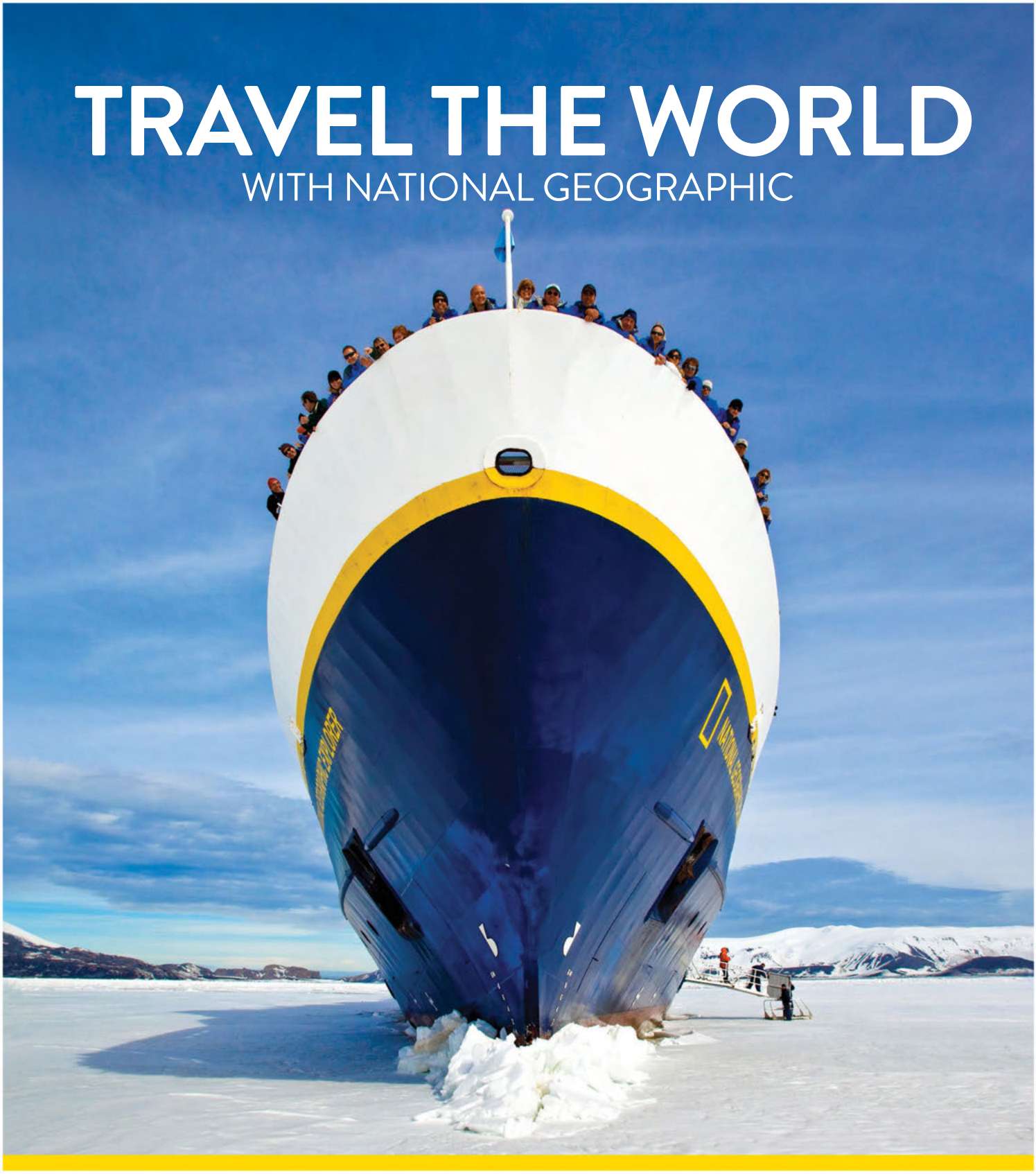
EUROPE'S BLACK DEATH
75 MILLION LOST

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA
HISTORY'S GREATEST LOVE AFFAIR

PLUS:
- HOW BRITAIN ABOLISHED SLAVERY
- JOSHUA, JERICHO, AND THE MISSING WALLS

PRAETORIANS
POWER, POLITICS, AND PLOTS

OCTOBER/ NOVEMBER 2015



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In the past getting sick was all too frequently a matter of life and death. Today most of us can turn to modern medicine and health care to overcome a wide variety of once lethal illnesses, but even now we are not immune to the terror associated with major epidemics such as the Black Death, featured in this issue.

The bubonic plague and its variants wiped out about a third of Europe's population in just a few years. In many ways it remains the benchmark against which outbreaks of disease are measured, and although now treatable with antibiotics, its name still sends a chill down the spine.

But for all the doubtless terror, tragedy, and suffering it caused, in hindsight we can see the Black Death as a critical turning point in history. It was an event that triggered major social and economic changes, and perhaps even initiated Europe's slow but steady transition from an often repressive medieval society to a more dynamic early modern world.

Jon Heggie

Jon Heggie, Managing Editor



PHOTO: MASSIMO PACIFICO/AGE FOTOSTOCK

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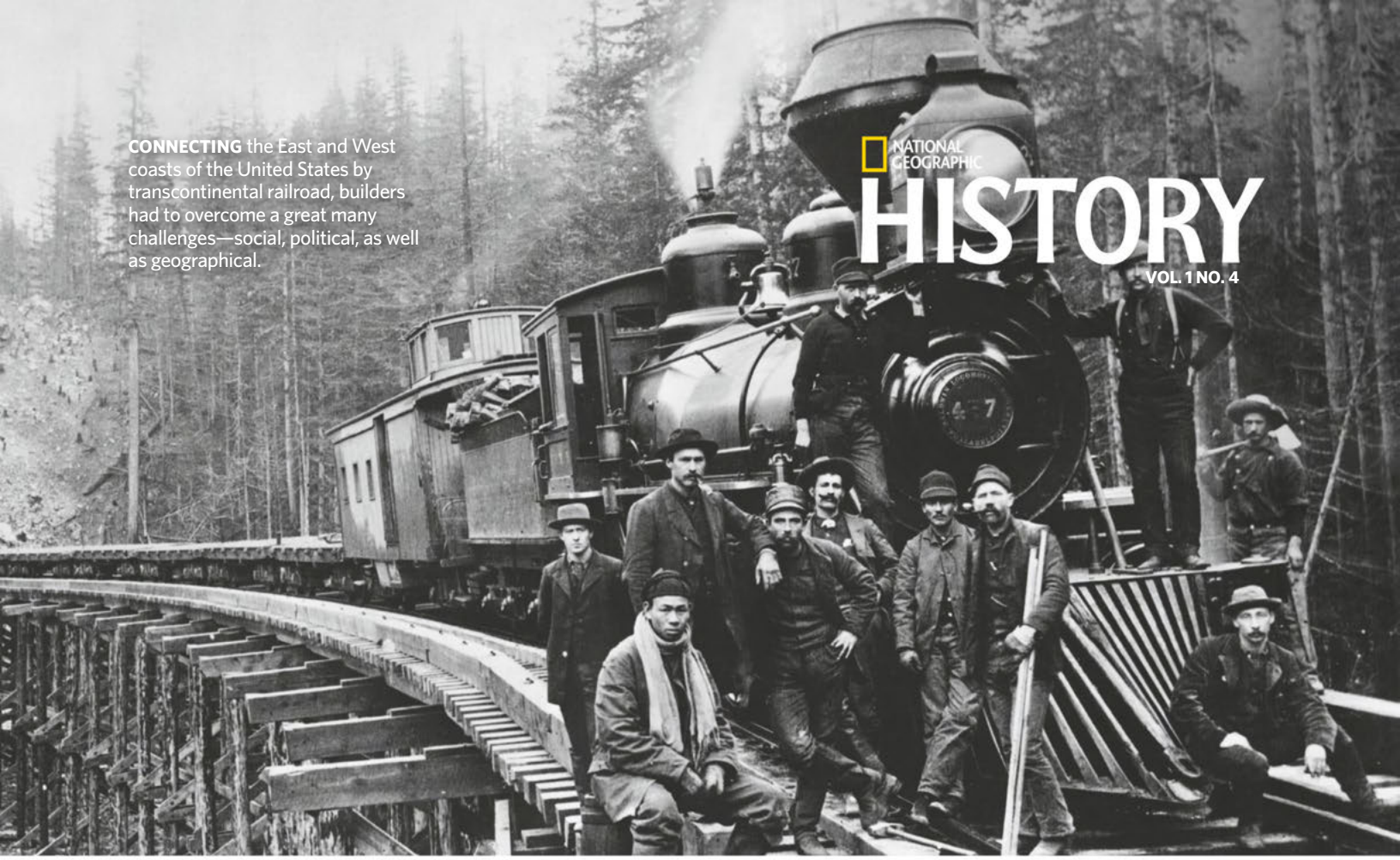
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CONNECTING the East and West coasts of the United States by transcontinental railroad, builders had to overcome a great many challenges—social, political, as well as geographical.

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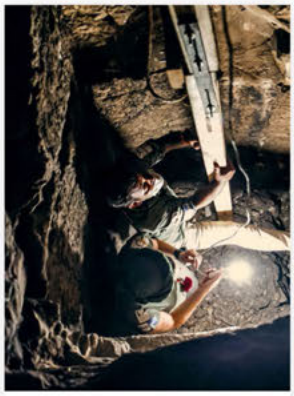
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MIN PROJECT. PHOTO: MATJAŽ KAČIČNIK



MIN PROJECT. PHOTO: MOSTAFA ALSAGHIR

TWO MEMBERS OF the team descend into one of the wells found in tomb 327. This is the only way to access the funerary chambers below. Unfortunately, the archaeologists discovered that the graves had been robbed, the interior scattered with hundreds of fragments of mummified remains.

Stairway to the Afterlife: A God's Chamber

Egyptologists have discovered what they believe to be a replica of a long-lost tomb built for Osiris, god of the underworld.

Many tombs have been discovered in Egypt, but recently one became noteworthy for being assigned to a particularly unusual occupant. It was not built for a mortal but for a god, and the god of the afterlife at that—Osiris. The discovery was made by two European archaeologists, Mila Álvarez and Irene Morfini, who are the directors of the Min Project, a dig on the western bank of the Nile, in Luxor. They have been excavating the tomb of an official called Min, located in the necropolis of Sheikh Abd el-Gourna, used to bury important dignitaries of Egypt's New Kingdom (16th-11th centuries B.C.).

In March 2014 they were exploring a tomb known as Kampp 327, when they discovered the burial place of an important 18th-dynasty civil servant called May, and his wife, Neferet.

Further excavations revealed a funerary complex that Álvarez and Morfini believe is modeled on the mythical Osireion of Abydos, a long-lost funerary monument in southern Egypt and the center for the cult of Osiris. The Luxor tomb seems to be a replica of what the ancient Egyptians imagined the final resting place of the god of the afterlife would look like.

From Kampp 327 Álvarez and Morfini had to descend many feet down staircases full of debris, in what



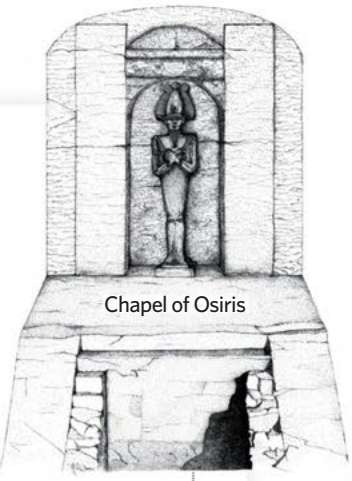
MIN PROJECT. PHOTO: PAOLO BONDIELLI

OSIRIS'S CHAPEL (above) with the statue of the god commanding the room. In front of it is the well that leads down to several funerary chambers. Egyptologists Mila Álvarez and Irene Morfini (below) work in cramped conditions inside the tomb known as Kampp 327.

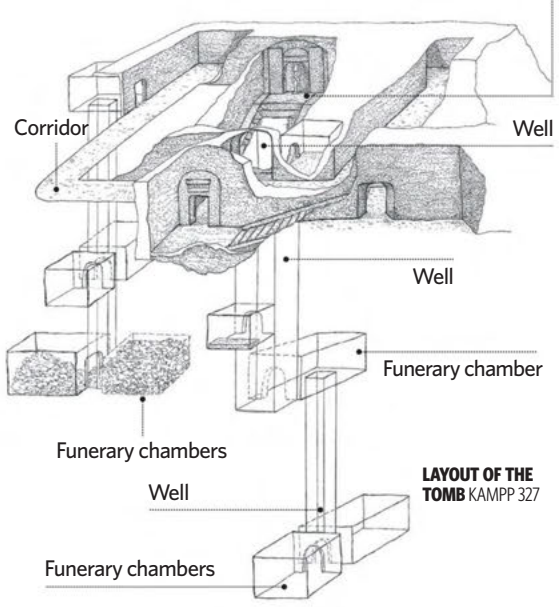


MIN PROJECT. PHOTO: EDU MARÍN (EFE)

WHAT LIES AT THE GOD'S FEET?



THE FUNERARY WELL discovered at the foot of the statue of Osiris was hidden underneath the stairs leading up to the god's statue. The stairs were actually detached, so that the steps could be removed to allow a new burial and then put be put back in place afterward. This ingenious design was intended to conceal the chambers and their rich treasures from grave robbers. Sadly, the strategy was unsuccessful, and the tombs were stripped bare of whatever grave goods they once held.



LAYOUT OF THE TOMB KAMPP 327

MIN PROJECT. ARTWORKS: RAFFAELLA CARRERA

Álvarez, the lead archaeologist, believes is a representation of the descent of the deceased into the underworld. The stairs lead to a portal through which they reached a vaulted chapel presided over by a magnificent statue of Osiris. He wears his characteristic atef crown and carries the crook and flail, traditional symbols of ancient Egyptian authority. In front of the statue they found a 30-foot-deep well that led to another well, 20 feet deep, which brought them to a vaulted funerary chamber that appeared to be immediately beneath the statue. There a corridor led to another chamber with yet another well, this one 26 feet deep and descending to four more funerary chambers.

The largest of these is decorated with reliefs depicting demons that sit or stand within little chapels. Some of them hold knives, while others have lizards in their hands. According to Álvarez, the deceased had to know and pronounce the names and the titles of these otherworldly creatures in order to gain access to the afterlife.

The funerary complex still holds many mysteries, not least being who built it. Since there is no inscription with the owner's name, we do not know if it was used to bury members of a family and later reused, or if it was originally conceived as a necropolis where the dead would be buried under the divine protection of Osiris. ■

Richard III: Unearthed, Reburied, Reconsidered

For 500 years Richard III has been reviled as a usurper, murderer, and tyrant. Now renewed interest in this English monarch is casting doubt on the accusations that have tarnished him for centuries.

From Minor Noble to King of England

1452

Richard is born to the powerful noble Richard, Duke of York, and his well-connected wife, Cecily Neville.

1461

Edward IV's accession makes Richard a prince. His ardent loyalty earns him Edward's gratitude and a strong power base.

1483

Richard is crowned King of England and begins a troubled two-year reign threatened by enemies both at home and abroad.

1485

Richard III is defeated at the Battle of Bosworth. His body is buried by Franciscan friars, but its exact location becomes lost over time.

2012

Years of research lead to the discovery of a battle-injured skeleton in a parking lot in Leicester. DNA tests confirm it is Richard III.

A parking lot in the English city of Leicester was the scene for a historic event in late 2012: the discovery of the long-lost body of King Richard III. For me the find was the result of ten years of research into the location of his grave. And it has sparked a renewed interest in a man who lived and ruled through a turbulent period of English history.

From 1455 to 1485 England was wracked by a series of wars as the country's two dominant families fought for the throne—the incumbent House of Lancaster and the rival House of York. Known as the Wars of the Roses, they began with Richard's father, the Duke of York, and were continued by his eldest brother who became King Edward IV.

Richard was a strong supporter of Edward and fought for him during a split in the Yorkist house that saw another brother, George, temporarily take control of the country. Once restored to power, Edward handsomely rewarded Richard, who remained loyal to the king until the monarch's unexpected death in 1483.

Richard's loyalty was widely assumed, and he was appointed Lord Protector of the Realm, with responsibility for the new king, his 12-year-old nephew, Edward V. Instead, Richard himself became king, under controversial circumstances. Richard ruled for just two difficult years before a rebellion ousted him and he was defeated at the Battle of Bosworth Field by Henry Tudor, whose coronation, as Henry VII, established the Tudor dynasty and effectively ended the Wars of the Roses.

Richard is an enigmatic figure, long reviled but recently restored to grace, as highlighted by the reburial of his remains with honor and dignity in Leicester Cathedral in March 2015. It is part of an ongoing reevaluation of his kingship that is bringing balance to 500 years of Tudor propaganda and misinformation.

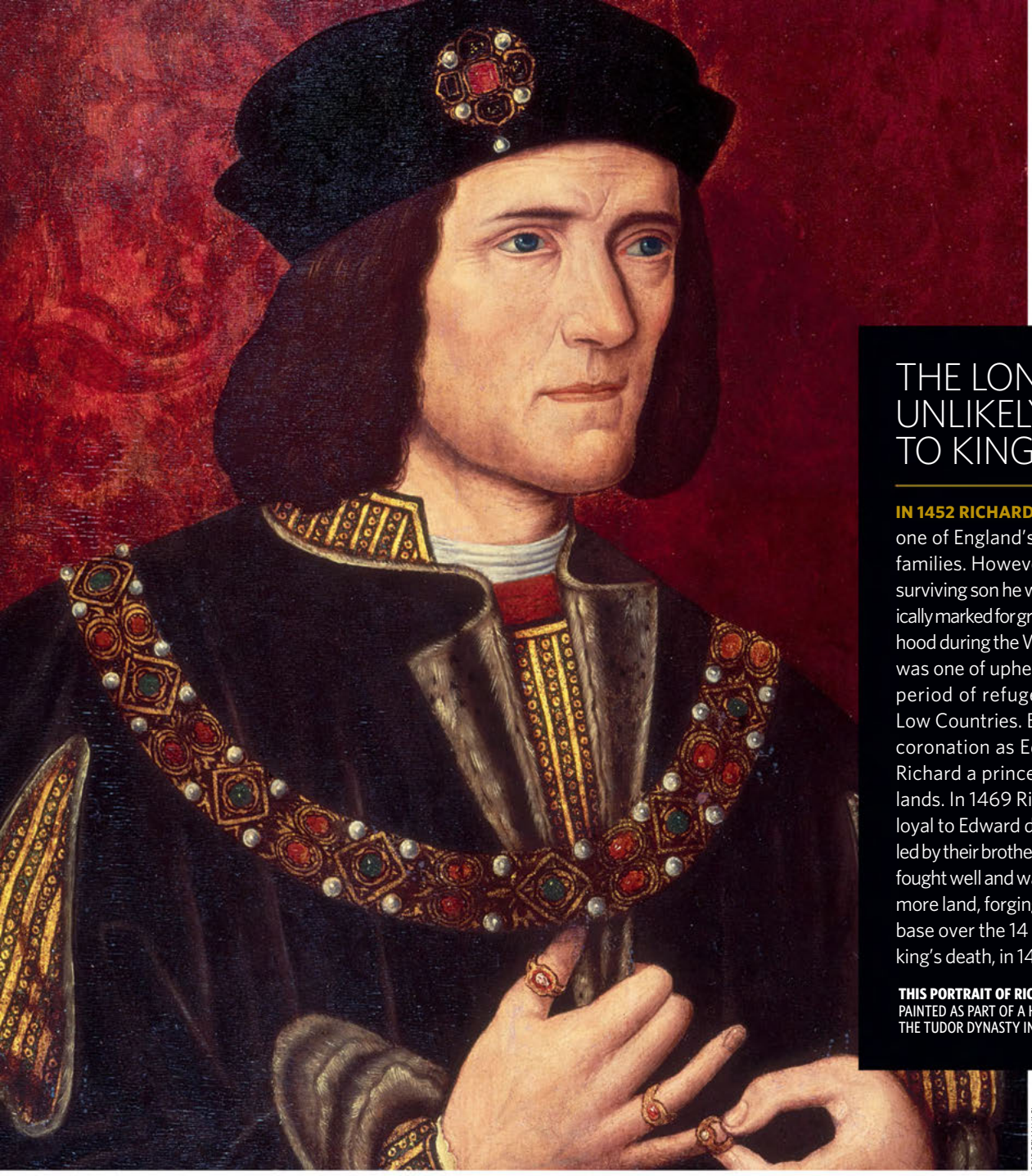
A Despised Monarch

The image of Richard III as a grotesque, twisted, and malevolent man who plotted, murdered, and usurped his way to the English throne comes largely from Shakespeare's eponymous play. But Shakespeare was not interested in accurate history: his play was a propaganda-driven thriller for the Elizabethan theater—Tudor audiences. Writing more than a century after Richard's death, Shakespeare drew on the few available and already tainted historical sources, and then applied poetic license to them, playing to and reinforcing the political prejudices of the time.



Richard ruled for two troubled years before being betrayed and defeated at the Battle of Bosworth.

THE GREAT SEAL OF RICHARD III, PORTRAYING THE KING AS A FIGHTING KNIGHT
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



BRIDGEMAN/ACI

THE LONG AND UNLIKELY ROAD TO KINGSHIP

IN 1452 RICHARD WAS BORN into one of England's most powerful families. However, as the fourth surviving son he was not automatically marked for greatness. His childhood during the Wars of the Roses was one of upheaval, including a period of refuge abroad in the Low Countries. But his brother's coronation as Edward IV made Richard a prince with titles and lands. In 1469 Richard remained loyal to Edward during a rebellion led by their brother George. Richard fought well and was rewarded with more land, forging a strong power base over the 14 years before the king's death, in 1483.

THIS PORTRAIT OF RICHARD III WAS PROBABLY PAINTED AS PART OF A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF THE TUDOR DYNASTY IN THE LATE 16TH CENTURY.

Just like some modern regimes that have removed opponents through military force, the Tudors rewrote history to suit their needs. Shortly after seizing power, Henry made an unprecedented move. He not only repealed the act of Parliament that had established Richard III's right to the throne, he also expunged all evidence of it. Only the first 13 words of the original act, all of them innocuous, were quoted in the repeal. He then made provision for all copies of the 1484 act to be destroyed "upon peine of ymprisonment . . . so that all thinges said and remembered in the said Bill and Acte maie be for ever out of remembraunce and also forgott." With the basis for Richard's accession to the throne nullified, it became possible to accuse him of illegally seizing the crown by force.

However, contemporary evidence shows that Richard III did not seize power by force of arms. Rather, he was legitimately offered the crown by the Three Estates of the Realm: the clergy, nobility, and commoners. In 1483 representatives of the estates were in London for the opening of a Parliament after Edward IV's death, when a bishop presented the accusation that the former king had committed bigamy.

The evidence revealed that in 1464 Edward had found himself attracted to the young and beautiful widow, Elizabeth Woodville. He tried to seduce her, but she refused to become his mistress. Edward, driven by desire, agreed to a secret marriage ceremony in order to get Elizabeth into his bed. This was not in itself unusual, but the bishop's evidence added a controversial spin to the story: Edward was already married. Several years earlier, the bishop



THE TOWER OF LONDON was where Richard and Edward, known as the Princes in the Tower, stayed before disappearing in the summer of 1483.

BRIAN JANNSEN/FOTOTECA 9X12

attested, Edward had entered into a similar secret marriage with Lady Eleanor Talbot. Eleanor was still alive when Edward later married Elizabeth Woodville, making him a bigamist and rendering his offspring, including the would-be Edward V, illegitimate.

Not everyone is convinced that Edward married Eleanor Talbot, but no one has ever questioned the basic fact of his relationship with her, and since Eleanor was both deeply religious and of royal descent, her reported refusal to become Edward's mistress seems credible. Moreover, even if she had not married Edward, the Three Estates accepted the story and used their legal authority to reject Edward V and invite a possibly reluctant Richard to become king over his nephew. Richard's portrayal as a usurper is therefore a graphic example of history being rewritten by the victor—Henry VII.

In the Name of the King

Tudor sources also accuse Richard III of being a murderer. In Shakespeare's play Richard is haunted by the ghosts of his alleged victims: Edward of Westminster (supposedly the son of King Henry VI); Henry VI himself; George, Duke of Clarence; Earl Rivers; Richard Grey and Thomas Vaughan; Lord Hastings; Edward and Richard, often called the Princes in the Tower; the Duke of Buckingham, and Queen Anne Neville.

THE FACE OF A QUEEN?

DAUGHTER OF THE EARL OF SHREWSBURY and granddaughter of the Earl of Warwick, Eleanor Talbot undoubtedly had a relationship with Edward IV, whose younger brothers married two of her first cousins. John Ashdown-Hill discovered what are probably her remains in the city of Norwich, England.

ELEANOR TALBOT, AUTHOR'S RECONSTRUCTION

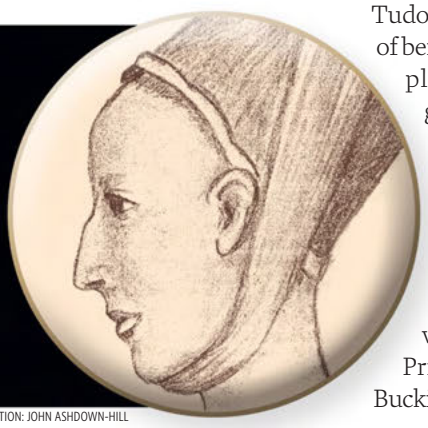


ILLUSTRATION: JOHN ASHDOWN-HILL

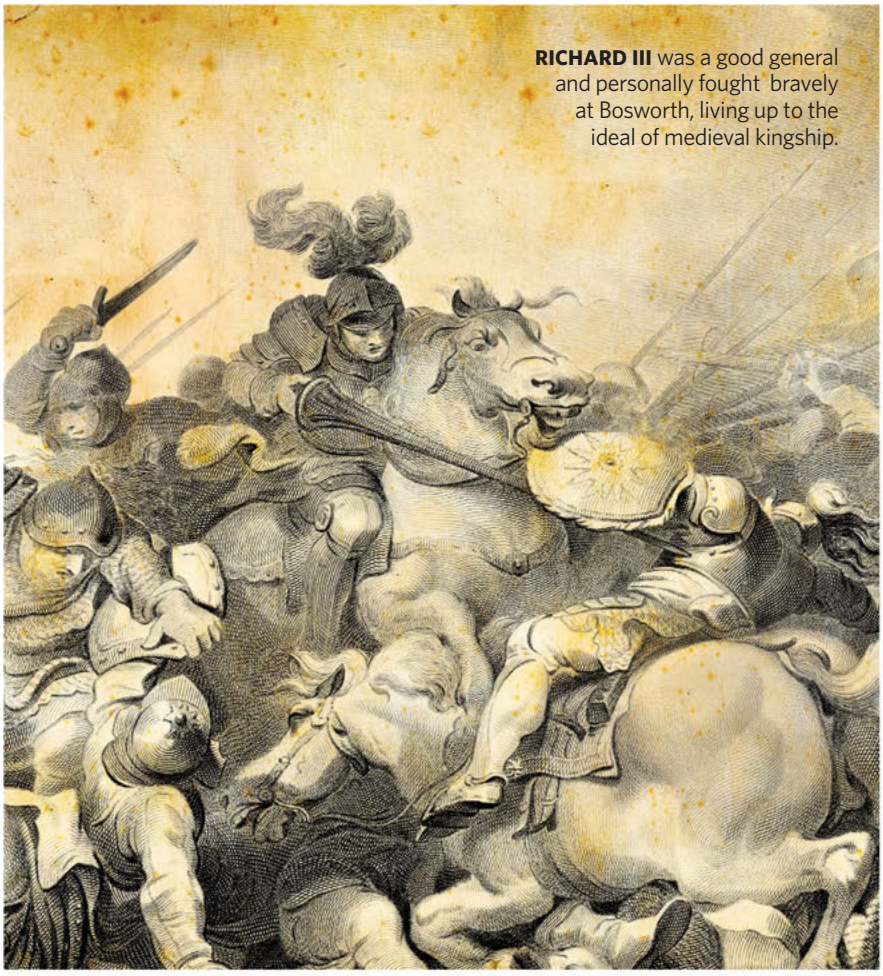
THE BATTLE OF BOSWORTH

IN 1485 Henry Tudor invaded England with an army of well-trained mercenaries. Richard III fought bravely, but the tide of battle turned against him when the forces of Lord Stanley defected to Henry Tudor. Richard was defeated and killed, his body lost for over 500 years.



BRIDGEMAN/ACI

A HELMET TYPICAL OF THOSE WORN BY ENGLISH KNIGHTS IN THE TIME OF RICHARD III



RICHARD III was a good general and personally fought bravely at Bosworth, living up to the ideal of medieval kingship.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

However Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, and Buckingham were not murdered, they were executed—a legal process. In fact Clarence was executed by Edward IV, whereas Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan were all executed by the Earl of Northumberland. Richard III did order the execution of Hastings and Buckingham, but on the grounds that they had conspired against him. Similar action by other rulers, including Henry VII, was viewed as a sign of strong kingship. As for the others, Edward of Westminster was actually killed in battle, and Anne Neville almost certainly died of natural causes. Mystery still shrouds the fate of the brothers Richard and Edward, but there is no hard evidence they were murdered, let alone murdered by Richard III.

It's also unclear why, if Richard had so few scruples about killing, he allowed dangerous enemies to live. Doctor John Morton had plotted with Hastings in 1483, but was imprisoned rather than executed. Lady Stanley had been involved in a rebellion and Lord Stanley's loyalty was questionable, not least because Henry Tudor was his stepson. But in June 1485, with Henry Tudor poised to fight for the crown, Richard granted Lord Stanley's request to retire from court. It was a decision that ultimately led to the king's defeat at Bosworth, where Stanley's support of Henry Tudor proved decisive.

Another story often told to discredit Richard's character is that he planned to marry, incestuously, his niece, Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. The letter on which this accusation is based has not survived, but rumors to this effect were circulating in 1485, after the death of Anne Neville. Richard was concerned about the accusations of incest and issued firm denials. That is not surprising, since the crown had been offered to him on the basis that Edward IV's children were illegitimate, including Elizabeth of York.

In fact, Richard III did intend to remarry in 1485, but his chosen bride was the Portuguese princess Joana. Moreover, his diplomats were also arranging a marriage between Elizabeth of York and a minor Portuguese royal to prevent her marrying Henry Tudor—a marriage Henry subsequently made in 1486 to strengthen his claim to the crown he won at Bosworth. His was an absolute victory, not only killing the king but his reputation as well.

—John Ashdown-Hill

THIS ARTICLE WAS EXCERPTED FROM *THE MYTHOLOGY OF RICHARD III* (AMBERLEY PUBLISHING) BY ASHDOWN-HILL. HE WAS MADE A MEMBER OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE FOR CONTRIBUTING TO RICHARD III'S DISCOVERY.

Roman Nights: Fire, Crime, and Sin in the City

The streets of Rome never slept. The rattle of ox-drawn carts, the shouts of drunken revelers, and the cries of the urban militia chasing criminals or fighting fires meant that only the rich could afford a good night's sleep in the imperial capital.



AKG/ALBUM

By day ancient Rome's narrow, steep, and stinking streets teemed with all manner of life; by night they were plunged into a near pitch-black darkness—but this did little to quell the commotion made by its citizens. As the sun set, the cacophony continued, leaving some Romans desperately craving the sound sleep that so many of their fellow citizens seemed to be spurning. Of those who took to the streets after dark, not all were hedonistic revelers lurching between debauched parties—though some certainly were. Many were ordinary people going about their business by night.

The Vigilantes

In Rome's densely packed, wooden framed, and oil-lamp-lit housing, major conflagrations could erupt at any time—but especially after dark. During the Roman Republic, bands of privately owned slaves, the *Triumviri Nocturni,* were tasked by the government with detecting and extinguishing fires. This arrangement proved woefully inadequate, so in 6 B.C. Emperor Augustus created the *vigiles* (firemen). These patrols had a similar function but were better organized and equipped to tackle the fires that all too frequently flared up.

The vigiles were arranged on a military model, consisting of seven cohorts numbering 500 to 1,000 men, subdivided into seven centuries around 70 to 80 strong. Each cohort patrolled two of the city's 14 administrative districts and came under the overall command of the Prefect of the Vigiles, a member of Rome's aristocratic equestrian order. Though vigilante work was considered to be beneath Roman citizens, it was not deemed prudent to have large groups of armed slaves roaming the city by night. A compromise was reached by filling their ranks with former slaves. The men were equipped with buckets, axes, picks, pumps, hooks, and blankets (for smothering flames). As the vigiles raced to the scene of an incident, a horn player called the buccinator went ahead

THANK YOU, GOOD NIGHT

RICH ROMANS who dined at the homes of family or friends would not only expect luxurious food and entertainment but also first-class transport there and back. Reclining on litters borne by burly porters, they would proceed through the dark streets with an escort of armed slaves and torchbearers lighting the way.



A TORCHBEARER, IN A MOSAIC FROM THE VILLA OF THE AVIARY, CARTHAGE, TUNISIA

ART ARCHIVE



MUSICIANS AND DANCERS enliven a banquet held at nightfall in a lavish Roman residence in this 19th-century oil painting by Henryk Siemiradzki.

sounding the alarm with a large trumpet.

In practice the vigiles duties went beyond fighting fires. They also acted as night watchmen, confronting a wide variety of nocturnal delinquents, including arsonists, burglars, cutpurses, muggers, murderers, and rapists. In spite of the presence of this urban militia, the nights were dangerous in imperial Rome, possibly because the vigiles were indeed more focused on firefighting than preventing or stopping crime. The hours of darkness were considered such a problem that the law had heavier penalties for crimes committed between sunset and sunrise. "Punishments for theft varied," wrote jurist

Rome's Royal Nights of Danger and Debauchery

THE MOST COLORFUL accounts of Roman nightlife often feature emperors such as the belligerent Nero or empresses such as Messalina, famed for her depravity. At sunset, such royal figures would sneak out of their palaces in disguise to taste the pleasures of the sordid side of the city.

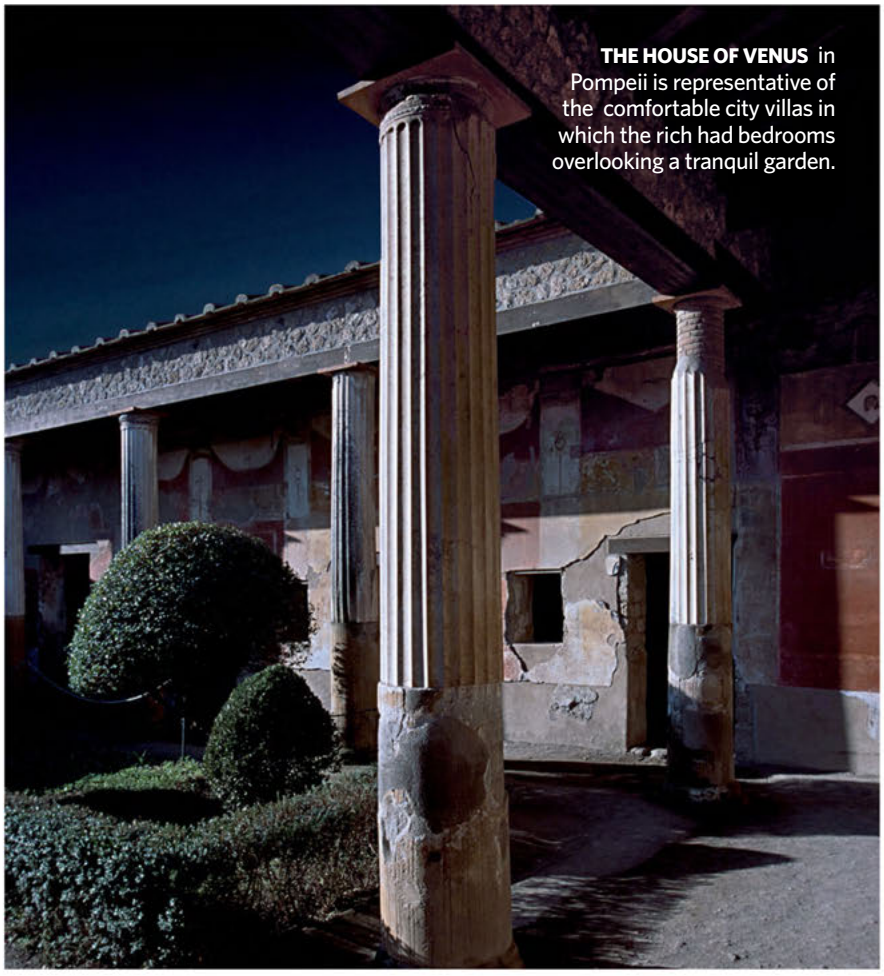
It is said that in the first century A.D. Messalina, wife of the Emperor Claudius, would put on a yellow wig and go to a brothel, where she would offer her services until dawn. Nero indulged his quarrelsome nature by passing himself off as a freed slave and roaming the plebeian areas of Rome provoking fights. In the second century the emperor Commodus, an aficionado of gladiatorial combat, was a habitual hell-raiser in bars and brothels. Like his infamous predecessors, he reveled in the low life that the imperial capital could offer in abundance.

THE BEST NIGHT YOU CAN BUY

ROME'S PLEBEIANS were mostly crammed into small apartments in noisy blocks known as insulae. Wealthy residents had a much better chance of a good night's sleep, as their bedrooms, although often small, opened onto cool courtyard gardens that sheltered them from the worst of the city's nighttime noise.



SILVER MIRROR FROM POMPEII, FIRST CENTURY A.D.
ALBUM



THE HOUSE OF VENUS in Pompeii is representative of the comfortable city villas in which the rich had bedrooms overlooking a tranquil garden.

ARALDO DE LUCA

Paulus around A.D. 200. "Nighttime burglaries were considered the most heinous; those caught were severely beaten, then sent off to work in the mines. Those who burgled by day were similarly beaten, but then sent off to do forced labor for a set amount of time."

The vigiles were not considered to be an especially effective deterrent for felons, as the second-century poet Juvenal noted: "There'll be no shortage of thieves to rob you, when the houses are all locked up, when all the shutters in front of the shops have been chained and fastened, everywhere silent. And, every so often, there's a vagabond with a sudden knife at work." In fact vigiles patrols were so conspicuous that most criminals simply slipped away on hearing their approach. Juvenal considered the city streets more dangerous than some of the most notoriously crime-ridden rural areas, explaining: "Whenever the Pontine Marsh, or the Gallinarian Forest and its pines, is temporarily rendered safe by an armed patrol, the rogues skip from there to here, heading for Rome as if to a game preserve."



A ROMAN TOMBSTONE FROM THE SECOND CENTURY A.D.
ORONOZ/ALBUM

Funerals were regarded as events that augured ill, so Romans initially held them at night, out of public view.

Traveling by Night

A significant contribution to the cacophony of Roman nights was made by heavy traffic. A decree by Julius Caesar (49-44 B.C.) had prohibited the movement of carts between dawn and dusk. This stringent restriction was aimed at reducing the risk of pedestrians being run over and to prevent the mix of people, animals, and wagons causing gridlock on the crowded streets. The only vehicles allowed to move freely by day were those actively taking part in processions, military triumphs, public games, or in the demolition or construction of public buildings.

All other traffic entered Rome by night, turning the city into a bustling hive of activity. Its dark streets rang with the relentless clatter of hooves

Let There Be Lights

THE ROMAN HOME was lit by lamps consisting of a bowl *(infundibulum)* containing olive oil or tallow, and a wick of threads *(ellychnium)*. Most lamps were very simple and constructed of cheap materials such as terra-cotta. More expensive lamps were designed to be works of art fashioned from bronze or gold.



LEFT TO RIGHT: INTERFOTO/AGE FOTOSTOCK; DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK; DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK; FOGLIA/SCALA, FLORENCE; FOGLIA/SCALA, FLORENCE

and iron-rimmed wheels on cobbled stone—not to mention the animals themselves and the shouts of the carters urging them on. Driven to distraction, the first-century poet, Martial, reflected enviously on the living arrangements of his friend who resided in relative peace on the other side of the Tiber, saying, "wheels should not disturb the soothing sleep which neither boatswain's call nor bargeman's shout is loud enough to break."

Torchlit Funerals

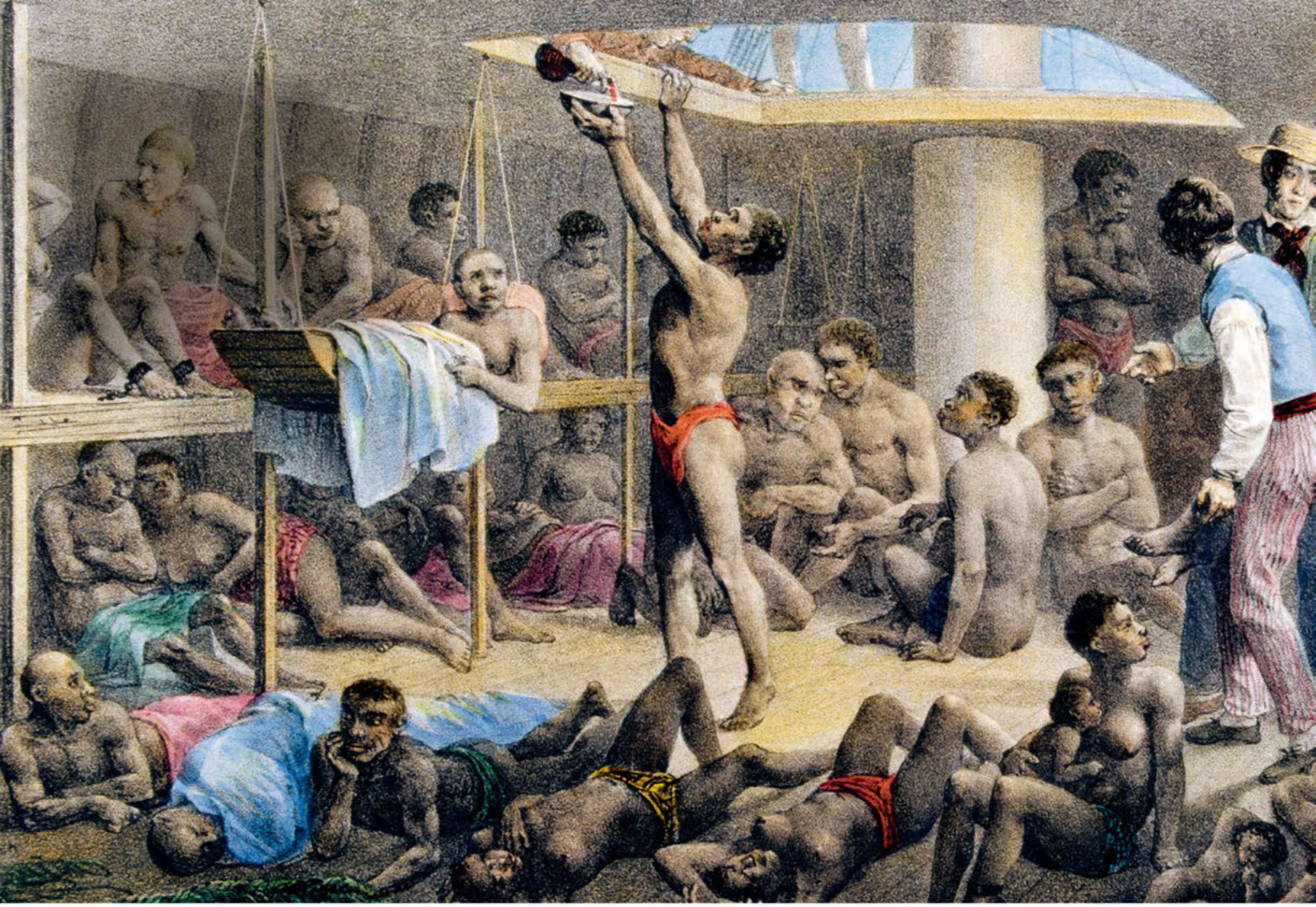
Nighttime was also when the refuse collectors came out. Under Julian law they were barred from removing garbage between dawn and the tenth Roman hour—around five in the afternoon in summer, and three in winter. Perhaps it was better that they did their work by dim torchlight, as among the detritus left for them to pick up were the bodies of dead beggars and slaves. They ended up in mass graves on the outskirts of the city. The funerals of the rich, attended by mourners, musicians, and a lavish cortege, were usually held during the day. But the burials of children and the poor were held at night, as their deaths were considered bad luck. Their bodies were removed in wheelbarrows or in hired caskets. The word "funeral" may have come from the *funalia,* the torches that headed the nighttime procession.

Sleep-deprived Romans, poets or otherwise, couldn't even dream of a morning sleeping in. Soon after first light the racket of daytime traders would begin, the air filling with their cries and mingling with the bellowing of schoolteachers instructing their young charges. Dawn also found the bleary-eyed tottering back from bars, brothels, and all-night banquets, where drink fueled ever louder revelry. "Some have reversed the functions of light and darkness," said Seneca, the first-century A.D. philosopher, "they open eyes sodden with yesterday's debauch only at the approach of night."

Juvenal struck a more worldly tone in his invective against the Roman night: "You have to be filthy rich to find rest in Rome. That's the source of our sickness. The endless traffic in narrow, twisting streets, and the swearing at stranded cattle."

The poet Martial, however, put his frustration in the plainest possible terms. Whatever the differences between the nights in ancient Rome and our modern world, people today can easily identify with the poet's description of insomnia two millennia ago: "But I am awakened by the laughter of the passing crowd; and all Rome is at my bedside."

—Pedro Ángel Fernández Vega



Britain's Battle to Abolish the African Slave Trade

In the 18th century a few devoted abolitionists turned the British public against the trade in human beings. But even then, they faced a long, difficult, and dangerous fight to win slaves their freedom.

In 1765 a bewildered black teenager from Barbados arrived in London. Jonathan Strong was a slave, the legal property of his owner who could do with him as he wished. The man beat Jonathan almost to death, abandoning his battered body in the street. He was rescued by Granville Sharp, whose brother William was a doctor with a reputation for treating the poor and misfortunate of London. William took the boy in and helped him to recover and find a job. But two years later, his owner recognized Strong, arranged to sell him, and had him seized. Outraged, Granville went to court to stop the sale, and Jonathan Strong was set free.

Granville was a devout Christian with liberal and democratic ideals typical of the Enlightenment thought popular in Europe at the time. Convinced that slavery was not only immoral but actually prohibited under English law, he decided to help other black slaves who were calling for their freedom. In 1772 Granville supported James Somerset, an escaped slave who had been recaptured in England. In a landmark case Somerset was freed, and it was widely, though mistakenly, interpreted as a sign that slavery was illegal in Britain. It was believed that there would be no more need for posters advertising silver shackles for Negros or dogs, and the poet William Cowper wrote, "Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs receive our air, that moment they are free."



AFRICAN SLAVES spent weeks and sometimes months being transported in dark, airless, cramped, and unhygienic conditions, with barely sufficient food or water.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



THE GREAT ABOLITIONIST

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE was a British MP who campaigned for the abolition of slavery and became a hero to black people around the world. An evangelical Christian, his spiritual adviser was a former slave trader who had repented and become the pastor at Wilberforce's church. In 1791 a group of slaves met in the British colony of Jamaica "to drink King Wilberforce's health out of a cat's skull by way of a cup and swearing secrecy to each other."

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

However, slavery in Britain was only a small part of a much bigger problem. Slave trading had been a common practice around the world for thousands of years. By the 18th century an entire international economic system had been developed based on transporting African slaves to British and French colonies in the Caribbean, where they were put to work on sugar, tea, coffee, and tobacco plantations. Their labor helped these small islands deliver huge profits to Britain, up to ten times more than Canada and the American colonies. Abolishing such an established, widely accepted, and profitable institution seemed an impossible dream and an economic calamity.



"Am I not a man and a brother?" was the abolitionist's emotional and philosophical slogan.

BRONZE MEDAL BEARING THE ABOLITIONISTS' SLOGAN
ART ARCHIVE

An Essay Against Slavery

In the 1780s a group of English idealists followed Granville Sharp's lead and launched a movement to turn public opinion against slavery. In 1785 Cambridge University held an essay contest with the title "Is it lawful to enslave someone against their will?" It was won by Thomas Clarkson, a 25-year-old theology student who couldn't get the subject out of his head. "A thought came into my mind that if the contents of the essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to their end." Moving to London, he met Granville Sharp and others of a similar mind, including many from the small Protestant sect of Quakers. Together they founded the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The activists launched a campaign to raise public awareness of the immorality of slavery. Clarkson traveled to Bristol and Liverpool, the principal ports for British slave ships, where he gathered information on the mistreatment of their human cargo. It was unpopular and dangerous work. In Liverpool he was almost murdered by a gang of sailors who had been paid to assassinate him. Undeterred, Clarkson helped to found local anti-slavery committees and held countless public meetings to debate the issue. At some of these, slaves gave moving



CAPE COAST CASTLE, in Ghana, could hold as many as a thousand slaves awaiting transportation in ships to Caribbean plantations.

A. VAN ZANDBERGEN/ACI

SELLING A SLAVE'S STORY

OLAUDAH EQUIANO was an African slave in the 18th century. He managed to buy his freedom and joined the British movement for the abolition of the slave trade. His autobiography made him rich and famous; in it he wrote, "I hope to have the satisfaction of seeing the renovation of liberty and justice."



18TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT OF OLAUDAH EQUIANO
ALBUM

personal testimonies to the horrors of life in bondage.

Slave traders and plantation owners were infuriated, complaining that "The press teems with pamphlets upon the subject . . . The stream of popularity runs against us." Some warned that the abolitionists risked provoking anti-European revolts in the Caribbean. Others even claimed, "Africans themselves have no objection to the trade." This was not entirely untrue as many African kings owned and traded slaves.

The Fight in Parliament

The aim of the campaign was to pressure the British Parliament into passing an act that would abolish the slave trade. Abolitionists in towns and cities across the British Isles collected signatures on petitions that were subsequently presented to the House of Commons. By the end of 1788 more than 60,000 people from all social classes had signed their opposition to slavery.

In Parliament the abolitionist cause was led by the young MP William Wilberforce. He was a rich landowner and in many ways a reactionary, but he was also a devout evangelical Christian, and his faith was a major force fueling his passion to end slavery. One story relates that when plantation owners argued that African slaves actually benefitted by being taken out of Africa, Wilberforce countered, "Be it so. But we have no right to make people happy against their will."

In 1789, backed by Prime Minister William Pitt, Wilberforce began his parliamentary campaign to abolish slavery. Together with Clarkson and the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, he worked day and night, even on Sundays, which he held

The Abuses Inflicted on African Slaves

ILLUSTRATIONS by artists like Isaac Cruikshank and James Gillray showed the cruel treatment of slaves and were used by Wilberforce in his campaign. Cruikshank engraved a scene aboard ship, in which a black woman is hung from her ankle by a British sailor while the captain prepares to flog her. James Gillray's drawing recounts the true story of a young slave who was too ill to work. He was thrown into a boiling vat of sugar by his overseer, with the reproach: "What? You can't work because you're not well?
. . . But I'll give you a warm bath to cure your ague."



ALBUM



AKG/ALBUM

sacred, writing an extensive report containing all the evidence he had gathered. The committee sent copies to every MP prior to a parliamentary vote in 1791. But the results were disappointing: 163 in favor of the slave trade and 88 against.

Women abolitionists then applied economic pressure by organizing a mass boycott of Caribbean sugar. This was taken up by more than 300,000 people, cutting sales by up to a half. One abolitionist wrote that his ten-year-old grandson had not taken sugar since he had read a tract by the anti-slavery campaigner William Fox. The abolitionists also produced a summary of the report they had prepared for Parliament and published it as a book. It sold thousands of copies.

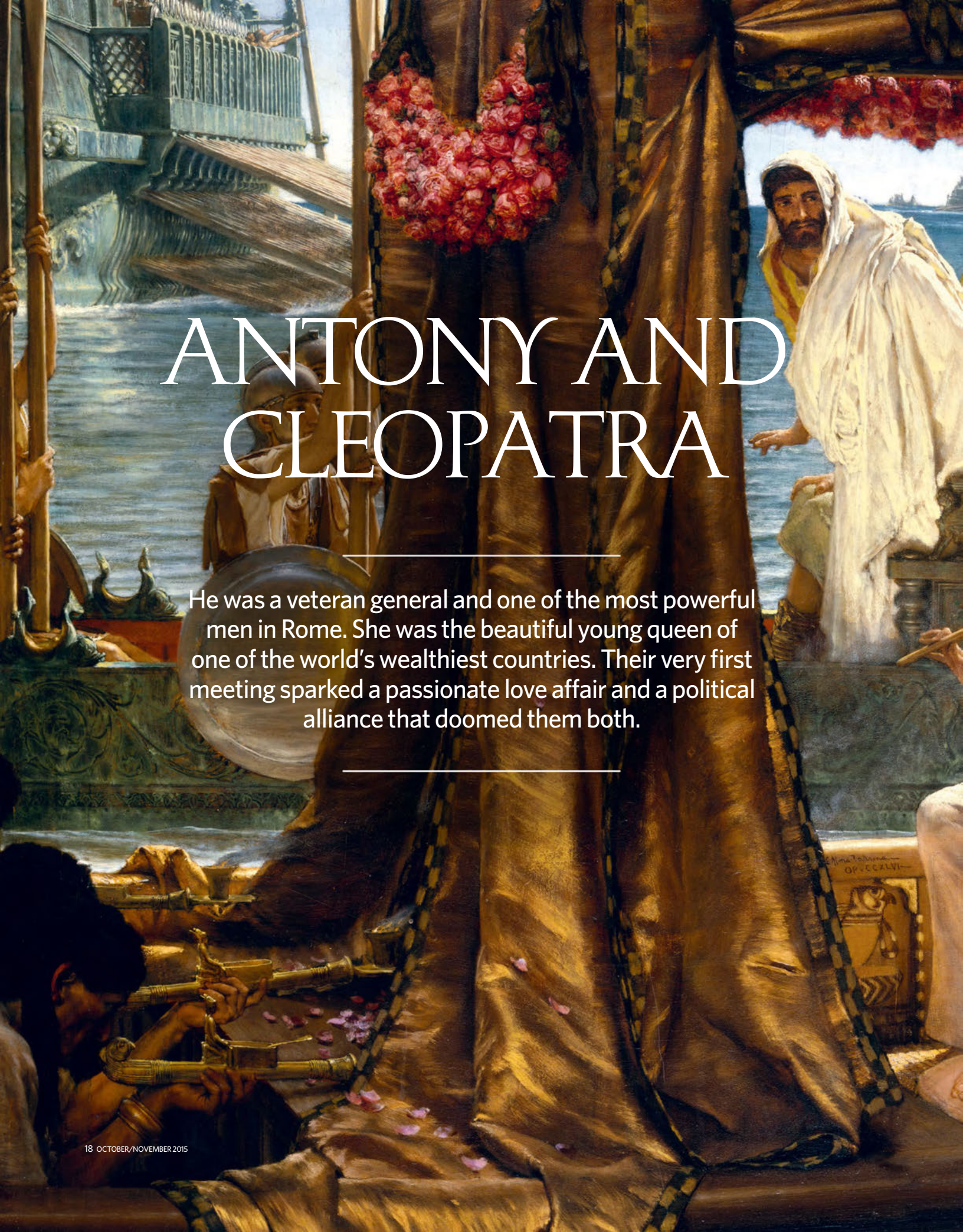
In 1792 Prime Minister Pitt finally managed to persuade the House of Commons to vote for abolition, but the bill was blocked by Parliament's upper body, the House of Lords. International events then intervened as the French Revolution triggered a wave of repression and censorship in England that weakened the abolitionist movement. Their cause was also undermined by a major slave revolt in Haiti in 1791. This sparked a series of rebellions throughout the Caribbean and suggested to some that the slave owners' ominous predictions were coming true.

A Hard-Won Freedom

However, Wilberforce and Clarkson would not give up, devoting the next 15 years to the cause. In 1807 they finally achieved their goal. Britain was at war with revolutionary France, and in 1806 the government banned British ships from carrying slaves to French colonies. With the support of Prime Minister Lord Grenville, Wilberforce persuaded MPs to extend the ban to the entire slave trade—although this did not abolish slavery itself.

In May 1830 Clarkson and Wilberforce, both old men by then, took part in the public meeting that launched the campaign for full abolition. Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833—a month after Wilberforce died. The full emancipation of slaves in the British Empire took effect on August 1, 1838. At midnight a ceremony was conducted in a church in Jamaica. William Knibb, a Baptist minister, reminded his flock that the English had landed the first slaves on the island in 1562. They placed a punishment collar, a whip, and some chains in a coffin bearing the inscription: "Colonial slavery. Died 31 July 1838, Age 276 years."

—Juan José Sánchez Arreseigor



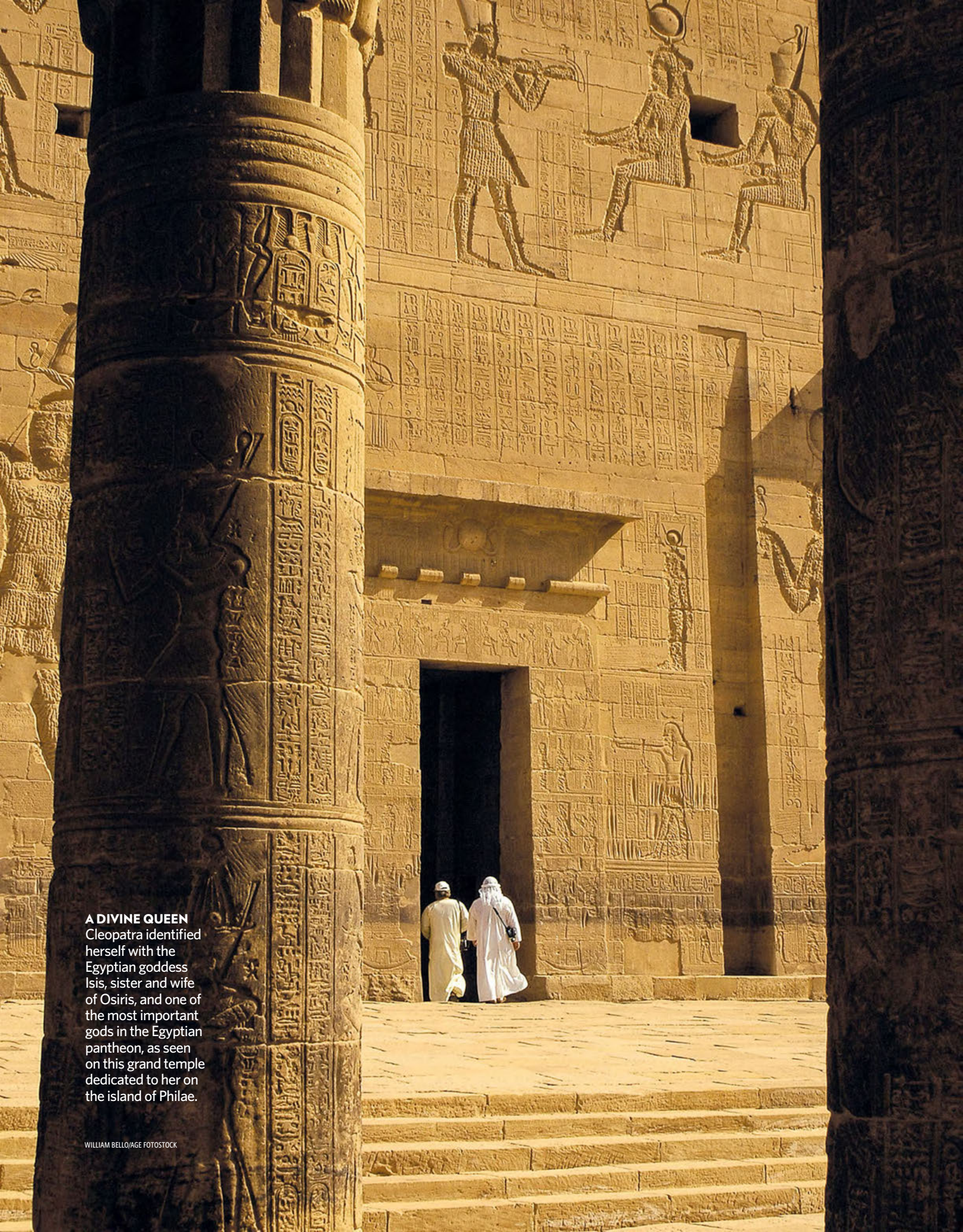
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

He was a veteran general and one of the most powerful men in Rome. She was the beautiful young queen of one of the world's wealthiest countries. Their very first meeting sparked a passionate love affair and a political alliance that doomed them both.



This 1883 painting by Lawrence Alma-Tadema shows Mark Antony impatiently waiting for a glimpse of the alluring Cleopatra when they meet in Tarsus on her luxurious barge.

CHRISTIE'S IMAGES/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS



A DIVINE QUEEN
Cleopatra identified herself with the Egyptian goddess Isis, sister and wife of Osiris, and one of the most important gods in the Egyptian pantheon, as seen on this grand temple dedicated to her on the island of Philae.

WILLIAM BELLO/AGE FOTOSTOCK

In 42 B.C. Rome's three most powerful men carved up the republic among them. The triumvirate of Lepidus, Octavian, and Mark Antony was an uneasy alliance after turbulent times. Placed in charge of the eastern provinces, Mark Antony found himself far from Rome and immersed in the Hellenistic culture he had always adored. It was a heady combination that drew him into the arms of Cleopatra, Egypt's beguiling queen.



EGYPT SUPPRESSED
Mark Antony and Cleopatra's dream of creating a great empire in the east was destroyed by Octavian's decisive victory at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. A Roman coin (above) commemorated the defeat of Egypt.

WERNER FORMAN/GTRES

As Antony journeyed to take up his new responsibilities, amorous adventures ranked low on his agenda. The triumvirate that ruled over Rome's vast territories needed to urgently restructure the army in the east, secure new sources of military funding, and launch a punitive expedition against the Parthians to avenge a humiliating defeat in 53 B.C. Julius Caesar had been planning such an expedition before his assassination, and Antony was keen to be seen to continue his great mentor's work. He also knew that a major victory against a foreign foe would greatly enhance his personal prestige and power.

Mark Antony's interests, however, extended beyond Roman politics. He had a deep love of the Greek Hellenistic culture that Alexander the Great's conquests had firmly embedded in the lands that now formed Rome's eastern provinces. The abundant cultural distractions helped to alleviate the heavy cares of state, and Antony took full advantage as he toured his territories. Visiting Athens, he won the sobriquet "Dionysus the giver of joy," and traveling in Asia Minor, he was met in Ephesus by a spectacular procession of men and women dressed as satyrs and priestesses of Bacchus, the Roman god of revelry. The citizens of Ephesus bestowed upon the Roman Antony the divine title of "Dionysus the benefactor."

Antony's grand tour then took him to Tarsus, in modern-day southern Turkey. From here he dispatched a messenger to the Queen of Egypt, inviting her to a meeting in the city. This was politics, not pleasure, as Rome needed to tap into Egypt's immense wealth, abundant grain supplies, and military strategic location. Cleopatra also had strong political reasons for meeting Antony. Winning the friendship of one of Rome's most powerful men would bring closer links with the republic, consolidating her grip on the throne and perhaps even expanding her kingdom. Already playing a brilliant political game, Cleopatra delayed her departure, heightening Antony's anticipation and ensuring the preparations were in place to make the Roman's first encounter with Egypt's queen one to remember.

A Sensational Entrance

Cleopatra dramatically played on Mark Antony's fascination for Greek culture and his love of luxury. She approached Tarsus by sailing up the Cydnus River in a magnificent boat with a golden prow, purple sails, and silver oars. As musicians played, Cleopatra reclined under a gold-embroidered canopy dressed as Aphrodite,

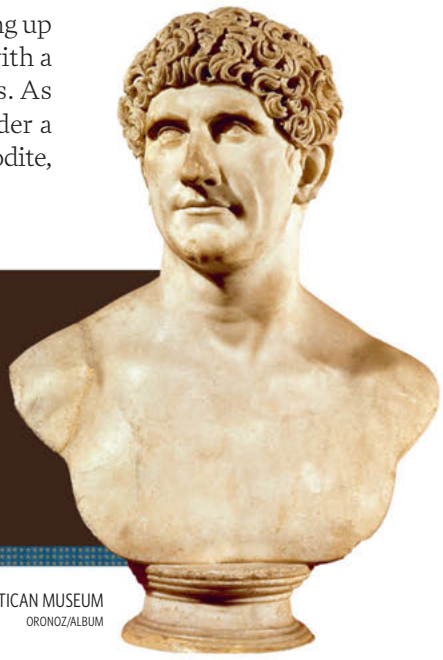
RULERS OF THE EASTERN WORLD

42 B.C.
The triumvirate defeats its enemies, and Antony is sent to reaffirm Roman control over the east.

41 B.C.
To tap Egypt's resources Antony invites Cleopatra to Tarsus. They become political allies and lovers.

40 B.C.
Antony's wife starts a rebellion, forcing Antony to return to Rome. To prove his loyalty he marries his ally's sister.

37 B.C.
Antony rejoins Cleopatra, launching a disastrous campaign against the Parthian Empire.



A MARBLE BUST OF MARK ANTONY IN THE VATICAN MUSEUM

ORONOZ/ALBUM





THE QUEEN OF EGYPT
On the rear wall of the temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor, in Dendera, Cleopatra VII had herself depicted as a queen, alongside Caesarion, the son she had with Julius Caesar.

GEORGE STEINMETZ

CLEOPATRA'S PEARL



"CLEOPATRA'S FEAST"
OIL PAINTING BY
JACOB JORDAENS, 1653
FINE ART IMAGES/SCALA, FLORENCE

PLINY THE ELDER'S account of a legendary banquet held by Antony and Cleopatra has become a classic illustration of the couple's uncurbed excesses. He tells that Cleopatra, competing with the boasts of her lover, claimed that she could spend ten million sesterces on one dinner. The next night's banquet was not noticeably more splendid than usual, until, during dessert, Cleopatra called for a goblet of vinegar. She removed a pearl earring of immense value and dropped it into the acidic liquid. The lovers watched the priceless jewel dissolve, and then Cleopatra drank the mixture, thus consuming a huge fortune.

This story is generally believed to be apocryphal, created to discredit Cleopatra, whom Pliny refers to as a prostitute in the same passage. But there are arguments to suggest that some form of spectacle involving a pearl may have taken place.

PEARLS IN EGYPT?
Pearls were not often used in Egyptian jewelry; more common were brightly colored, semiprecious stones mounted in gold. However, pearls were widely appreciated across the Roman world in the first century B.C.

SOLUBLE IN VINEGAR?
Modern experiments have concluded that the acid in vinegar does indeed dissolve pearls—but slowly. Perhaps Cleopatra's goblet contained something more than vinegar to speed the process?

DIGESTIVE POTION?
Cleopatra's unusual drink may have been a form of digestif that settled the stomach after a rich meal. This custom may have been adopted from India, where powdered pearls were sometimes eaten to aid digestion.

Greek goddess of love. She was fanned by youths dressed as Eros and waited upon by girls dressed as sea nymphs, while servants wafted perfume toward the gaping crowds lining the river. As sound and smell embellished this visually suggestive tableau, the impression made by Cleopatra must have been truly extraordinary.

Antony was overwhelmed by the spectacle. The Greek historian Plutarch describes a scene in which the Roman was abandoned in the city square as his attendants joined citizens racing to the river for a first glimpse of the queen. Caught off guard, Antony decided to invite Cleopatra to a banquet. However, the Egyptian queen was in complete control of events, and instead Antony found himself accepting her invitation to a feast she'd already prepared. According to Athenaeus, quoting Socrates of Rhodes, gold and precious gems dominated the decor of the dining hall, which was also hung with expensive carpets of purple and gold. Cleopatra provided expensive couches for Antony and his entourage, and to the triumvir's amazement, the queen told him with a smile that they were a gift. Antony tried to reciprocate but soon realized he could not compete with Cleopatra.

According to Plutarch, the queen had been convinced that her conquest of Antony would be easier than her earlier seduction of Julius Caesar—she was now far more experienced in the ways of the world. At 28 she had the confidence, intelligence, and beauty of a mature woman. She was sure of winning over Antony through a combined assault of conspicuous consumption and generosity, proving both Egypt's abundant resources and her famed seductive charms. By some accounts Cleopatra's beauty would not have turned heads at first sight, but she was deeply charismatic and was noted for her sweetness of voice. Cleopatra also knew she had the advantage: Antony had seen her in Alexandria 14 years earlier and been captivated by her then. Now they fell wildly in love.

Days of Wine and Roses

Antony and Cleopatra spent the winter of 41-40 B.C. in Alexandria, reveling in the unique mix of Egyptian and Greek culture for which the city was renowned. They were inseparable companions, playing dice, drinking, and hunting together. The lovers developed a taste for nocturnal escapades, walking the streets dressed as slaves. On one occasion Antony was even jostled and struck in an unsuspecting crowd. They organized lavish banquets for each other. Money was no object for what they called "The society of inimitable livers." Writing about the reckless extravagance of these banquets, Plutarch described what his grandfather had seen when invited to visit the royal kitchens. The vast quantity of food being prepared, including eight entire roast boars, amazed him. This led him to speculate about the great numbers of guests expected, at which the royal cook burst out laughing. He said that in fact only 12 diners were coming, but they always prepared much more food, as Antony's appetites were so unpredictable.

Antony seemed to live a double life, and not just because he was already married with a highly political wife in Rome. There were two sides to his character: The sobriety and gravitas of the Romans and



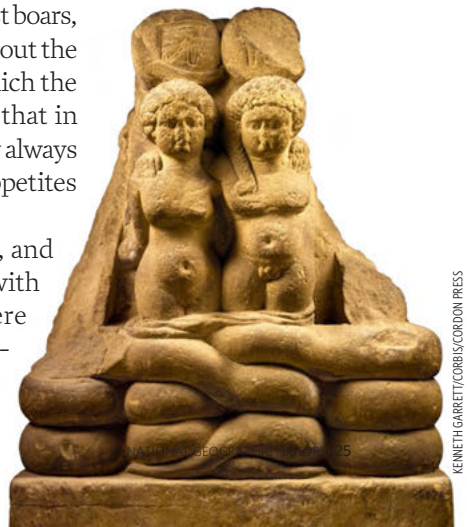
BRIAN JANNSEN/AGE FOTOSTOCK

FACADE OF THE LIBRARY OF CELSUS, EPHESUS, BUILT IN A.D. 110

A SISTER SACRIFICED

ARSINOE IV, the younger half sister of Cleopatra, was captured by Julius Caesar in 47 B.C. She was paraded in his triumphal procession through Rome, where the crowds showed her such compassion that Caesar spared her life. She was sent to live in Ephesus at the temple of Artemis. Six years later, following Cleopatra's meeting with Mark Antony, the queen persuaded him to order her death. Arsinoe was duly taken out of the sanctuary and executed.

THE ROYAL LOVE CHILDREN
Statue of Alexander Helios, the sun, Cleopatra Selene, the moon, the twin children of Antony and Cleopatra, born in late 40 B.C.



KENNETH GARRETT/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS



THE CHARISMATIC RULER OF EGYPT
With her beauty, brains, and beguiling charms Cleopatra succeeded in captivating two of the most powerful men in Rome: Julius Caesar, and later, Mark Antony.

SANDRO VANNINI/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

the fun-loving Dionysian spirit of the Greeks. Indeed, Alexandrians said that while he was in the company of Egyptians Antony wore the mask of comedy, but with the Romans he would switch to the mask of tragedy.

One anecdote recounts Antony's irritation when Cleopatra witnessed his poor performance at fishing. Having had no luck, Antony secretly ordered a diver to load his hook with fish that had already been caught. After he landed these in quick succession, Cleopatra realized what was going on; she loudly praised Antony's skill and invited friends to return and admire his ability with rod and line the next day. Unbeknownst to Antony, the queen ordered a diver to put an obviously dead fish on Antony's hook. Thinking that this time it was a genuine catch, Antony hauled it in to gales of laughter. "General, leave the fishing rod to us poor rulers of Pharos and Canopus," Cleopatra teased him, "Your prey is cities, kingdoms, and continents."

The Tragedy's Final Scenes

Antony and Cleopatra had achieved a contented balance between their taste for pleasure and their political responsibilities. However, the spring of 40 B.C. brought news from Rome that shattered the hedonistic idyll of the lovers: Antony's wife was causing trouble. Fulvia and Antony's brother had mounted a political challenge to Octavian, who ruled the west from Rome. Naturally, Antony was implicated and it's likely he had some knowledge and probably gave them his tacit approval. But the conspiracy collapsed, and Antony had to do everything possible to persuade Octavian of his innocence, including returning to Italy. Conveniently, though not suspiciously, Fulvia died that year, and Antony seized the political opportunity.

To prove his loyalty and cement the alliance, Antony married Octavian's sister, Octavia. She was considered by some to be more beautiful than Cleopatra, but as a model of sober Roman virtue, she was very different from the pleasure-loving Egyptian.

Antony finally returned east in 37 B.C. and immediately resumed his passionate affair. He still saw in Cleopatra not only a matchless lover but also a highly efficient ruler, whose political ambitions were attuned with his own. He bolstered her right to rule Egypt, while she supported his belated campaign against the Parthians, a military venture that ended in disaster.

In Rome, Octavian viewed these activities with growing disdain. Tensions grew between the former allies and then erupted into a war that Octavian presented as a struggle against a dissolute Egyptian queen into whose clutches Antony had fallen. The armies of the Roman rivals met in Greece, where Octavian managed to cut Antony's supply lines to Egypt. Forced into action, Antony took Cleopatra's advice to fight at sea. In 31 B.C. about 900 ships clashed at the Battle of Actium. It was a closely fought engagement. But when Cleopatra's galleys fled Antony followed, and his forces soon surrendered. The lovers were defeated, and in a dramatic fashion, both took their own lives. Mark Antony's death removed the last obstacle to Octavian becoming sole emperor of Rome. He assumed the title Augustus in 27 B.C. ■

FERNANDO LILLO REDONET
LILLO REDONET HAS WRITTEN A SERIES OF NOVELS AND ESSAYS ABOUT CLASSICAL GREECE AND ROME.



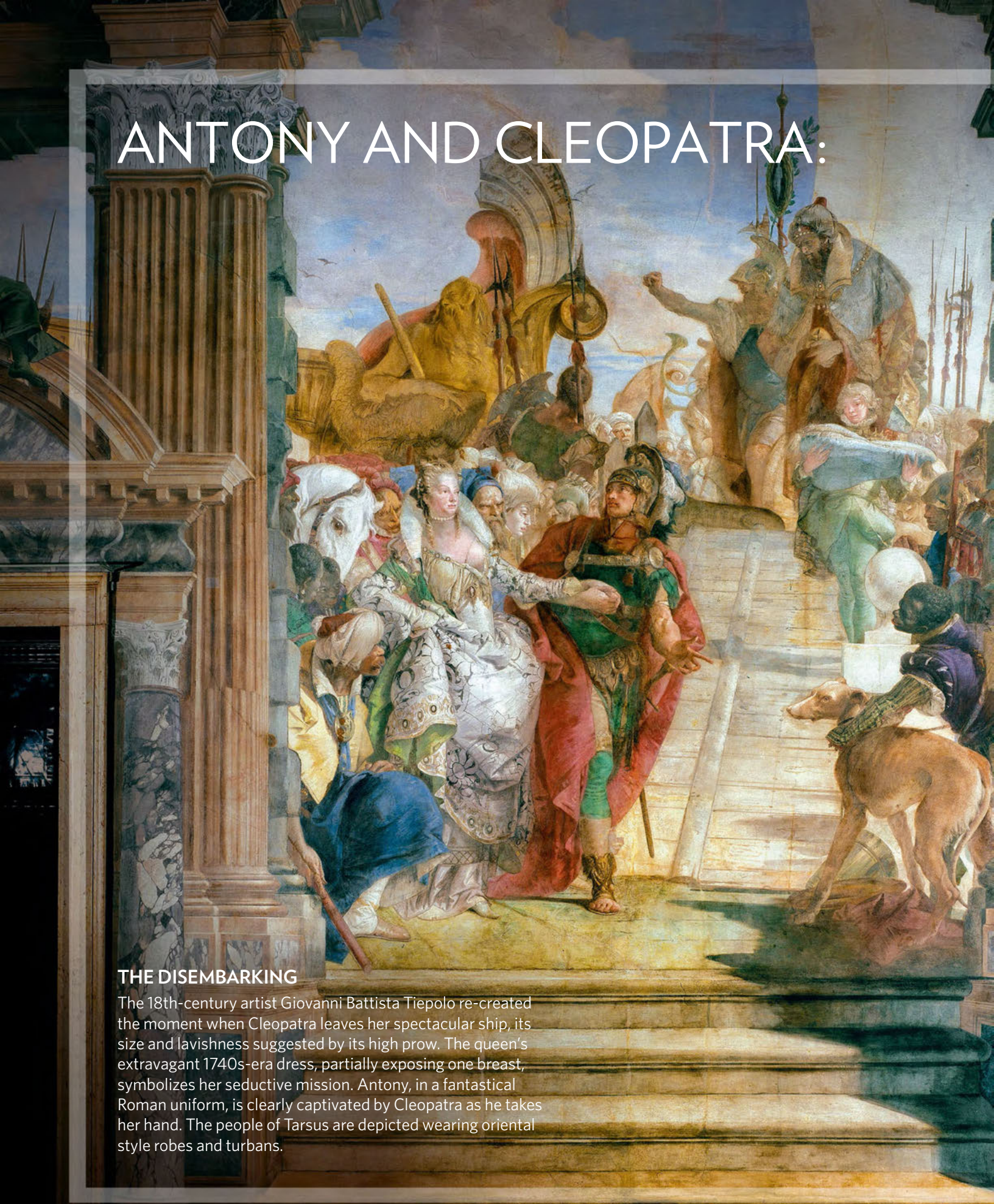
A ROMAN THEATER AT KOM AL-DIKKA, ALEXANDRIA, BUILT IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

C. SAPPA/DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

NEWS FROM ALEXANDRIA

THE LUXURY AND EXCESSES of the Alexandrian banquets fascinated contemporary commentators. Ancient authors chronicle the continual stream of gifts that Cleopatra presented to Antony and his entourage. On one occasion she gifted them the very couches on which they had reclined during their meal, and then gave them the litters, bearers, and horses with which they traveled home.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA:



THE DISEMBARKING

The 18th-century artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo re-created the moment when Cleopatra leaves her spectacular ship, its size and lavishness suggested by its high prow. The queen's extravagant 1740s-era dress, partially exposing one breast, symbolizes her seductive mission. Antony, in a fantastical Roman uniform, is clearly captivated by Cleopatra as he takes her hand. The people of Tarsus are depicted wearing oriental style robes and turbans.

SCALA, FLORENCE

A GENERAL MEETS HIS MATCH



THE BANQUET

Cleopatra has prepared a feast for her Roman suitor that she claims will cost ten million sesterces. The queen appears with both breasts exposed, reinforcing the popular image of her as a temptress. In her right hand she holds the priceless pearl she will dissolve into the cup of vinegar being brought by a servant. At the table is Mark Antony and his close adviser Lucius Munatius Plancus, who sits with his back turned to us. In the background is an obelisk that helps place the scene in Egypt.

GIOVANNI BATTISTA TIEPOLO: SCALA, FLORENCE



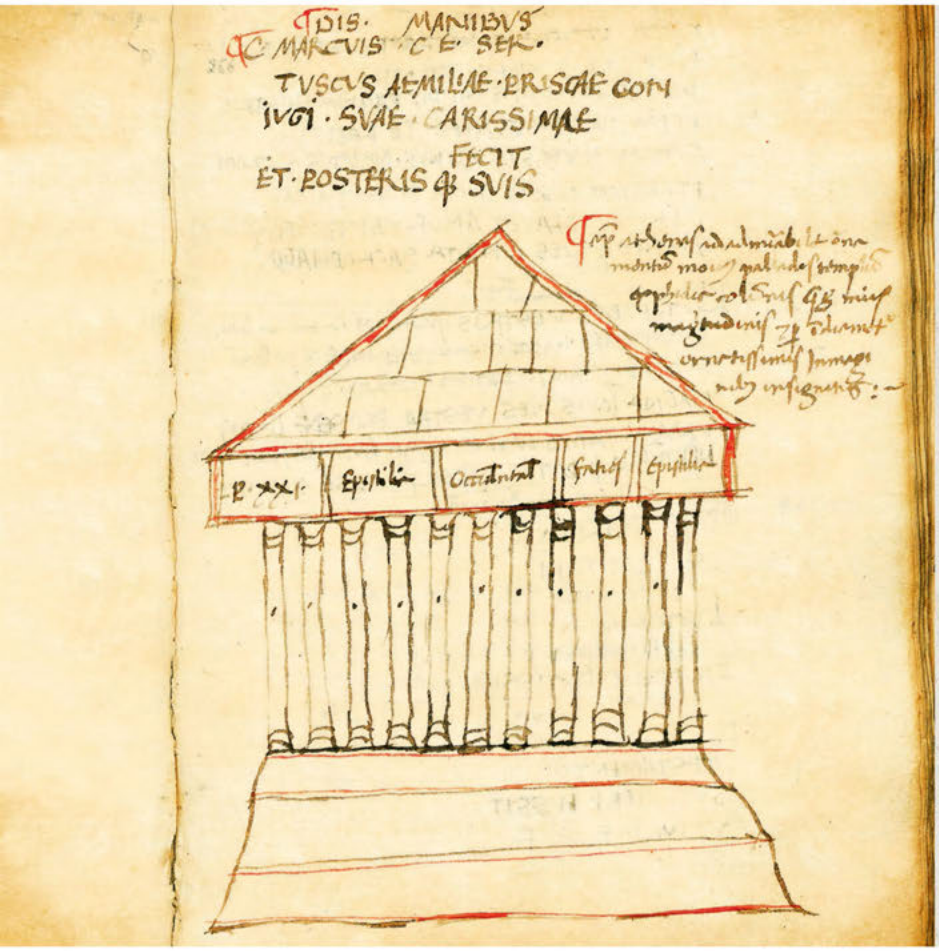
Blown apart by an explosion in 1687, this is the best preserved part of the building. The statues on the pediment were removed by Lord Elgin at the start of the 19th century.

MLENNY PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



PARTHENON

It was built to celebrate the triumph of Athens over adversity, but survival would be hard for this extraordinary building. Over 2,500 years it has been abused, plundered, neglected, and all but obliterated. Its remains now stand as a proud symbol of the endurance of Greek civilization.



BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

A TOURIST'S IMPRESSION OF ATHENS

IN 1436 CYRIACUS OF ANCONA, an Italian traveler, described his journeys through Greece: "I came to Athens, the celebrated city of Attica, where I saw, first of all, large walls everywhere in a state of collapse owing to their age. Both inside the city and out in the fields there were marble buildings beyond all belief—houses, sacred shrines—as well as various works of art remarkable for their marvelous execution and enormous columns, but all in heaps of shattered ruins everywhere." Cyriacus found one monument particularly impressive: "What pleased me most of all was the great and marvelous marble temple of the goddess Pallas on the topmost citadel of the city, a divine work by Phidias." This was the Parthenon that Cyriacus sketched in his notebooks.

DRAWING THE PARTHENON

Cyriacus of Ancona made two journeys to Athens, in 1436 and then 1444. He made many sketches of buildings, some of which were copied (above). Cyriacus's original manuscripts were destroyed by a fire in 1514.

For nearly 2,500 years Athenians have looked up and admired the imposing silhouette of the Parthenon, built high on the rocky outcrop of the Acropolis that dominates Athens and its surroundings. Even today amid a skyline of tower blocks and construction cranes the Parthenon maintains a dignified and watchful presence over the sprawling Greek capital. It nearly wasn't so, for war all but obliterated this magnificent monument; what remains is a mere shadow of its former self. The vast roof is gone, its many towering columns have collapsed and crumbled, and precious few of its spectacular statues and sculptures remain. These skeletal ruins are all that have survived the ravages of a long and torturous history. Yet, remarkably, it remains an impressive and truly iconic sight.

The Parthenon was built between 447 and 432 B.C. It was the centerpiece of a hugely ambitious construction program commissioned by the great Athenian statesman Pericles to celebrate the city-state's victory in a 50-year war against the Persian Empire. An *acropolis*, meaning "city at the top," was a hilltop fortification, found in all ancient Greek cities, that protected the main municipal and religious buildings. In Athens the Acropolis had been badly damaged during a devastating Persian

ADMIRED, DESTROYED, RESTORED

447 B.C.

Pericles commissions the construction of a new Parthenon and other buildings on the Acropolis. The temple is inaugurated in 438 B.C., with the last statues in place by 432 B.C.

1436-1444

The Italian traveler Cyriacus of Ancona visits Athens twice and fills six books with sketches of ancient Greek buildings and temples, including the Parthenon, which particularly impressed him.



BUST OF PERICLES, ROMAN COPY OF THE ORIGINAL
M.FLYNN/PRISMA

GEORG GERSTER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

siege. The original Parthenon temple had been destroyed, so Pericles decided to rebuild it in an even more glorious style to express the renewed confidence of the city-state.

He made plans to redevelop the whole Acropolis, including building the great stairway of the Propylaea and the neighboring Erechtheum temple. But the Parthenon would be the jewel in the crown. It was built to house a superlative statue of the city's patron and protector: Athena Parthenos, the Virgin. To honor the goddess, the architects Ictinus and Callicrates designed a temple of peerless grandeur. Although it followed a traditional Greek design, the Parthenon's enormous size and the quality of its construction were truly exceptional. The project was supervised by the great sculptor Phidias, who meticulously oversaw the program of artistic beautification. The result was an extraordinary temple and a powerful testament to the triumph of Athenian democracy.

From Pagan Virgin to Virgin Mary

Over the following 25 centuries war, neglect, and the political waning of Athens progressively stripped the Acropolis of its treasures. As early as the second century Roman visitors to the city had begun carrying off whole statues as souvenirs. A fire in the third century further damaged the site's former majesty. But it was the arrival

REBUILDING THE RUIN

In the 1930s the Parthenon's columns were reconstructed using fragments found scattered on the Acropolis's esplanade. This created the iconic silhouette visitors to Athens see today.

1687

A mortar shell fired by Venetian troops falls on the Parthenon where its Ottoman defenders had stored their gunpowder. The explosion destroys the structure and many of its sculptures.

1801-1811

The British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Elgin, uses his contacts at court to allow him to remove and transfer to Britain most of the Parthenon's surviving decorations—the Elgin Marbles.

1833

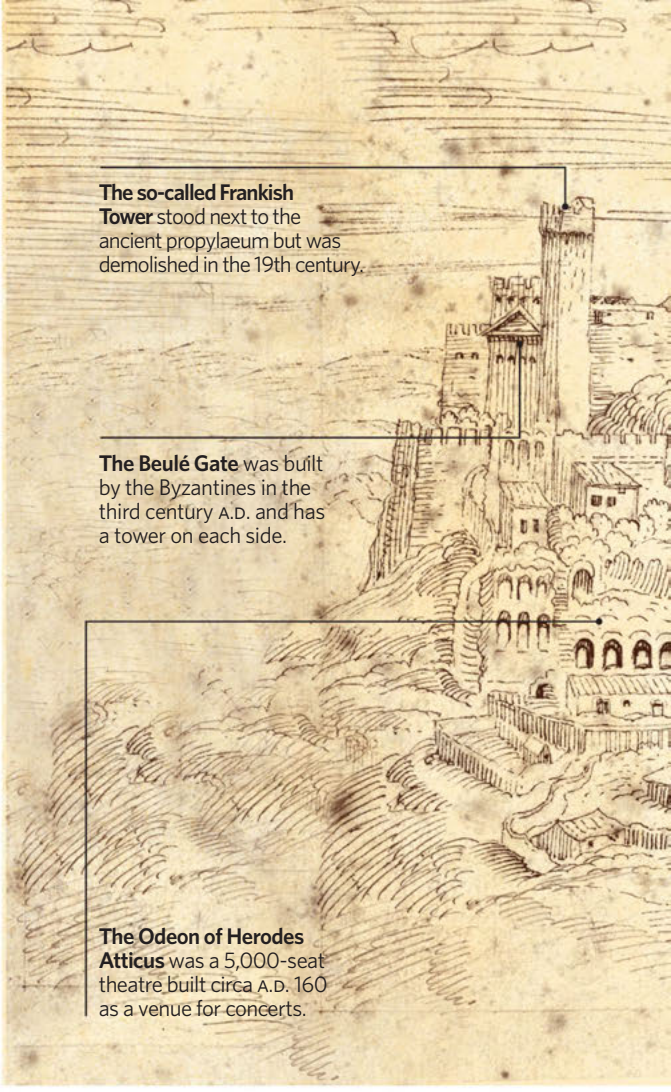
Greece wins its independence after an exhausting war against the Ottomans. Throughout the following centuries the new nation undertakes numerous projects to try to restore the Parthenon.



OTTO I, KING OF GREECE, 1832-1862
AKG/ALBUM



ORONOZ/ALBUM



THE MOST PRECIOUS JEWEL IN THE WORLD

CLIMBING THE ACROPOLIS, today's visitors can see a recently installed plaque bearing the words of Peter IV of Aragon. His medieval kingdom, which eventually merged with Castile to form modern Spain, brought whole areas of the Mediterranean under its sway—including Athens. The words on the plaque are taken from a royal letter, written in 1380, in which the king orders 12 archers be sent to defend the "castle" of Athens. He wrote, "The Castle of Athens is the most precious jewel that exists in the world, and such that all the Kings of Christendom could in vain imitate." The year he wrote these words, Peter IV had formally taken control of the dukedoms of Athens and Neopatras, which had been in the hands of his fierce Aragonese infantry, known as the Almogavars, since 1311. The Acropolis was the nerve center of the Athenian duchy, and at that time the Parthenon itself was the Cathedral of Santa María. In 1388, after 15 months of fierce Aragonese resistance, the Acropolis fell to the army of the Florentine aristocrat Nerio I Acciajuoli.

THE ARAGONESE ALMOGAVARS MARCH UNDER THE GAZE OF THE BYZANTINE EMPEROR IN CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1303. OIL PAINTING BY JOSÉ MORENO CARBONERO, 1888

of Christianity that really accelerated the decline of the classical Acropolis. In the fourth century Roman emperor Theodosius I banned the worship of pagan gods, bringing the thousand-year-old cult of Athena to an end. Her 38-foot-high statue of ivory and gold, sculpted by the masterful Phidias himself, had already disappeared sometime in late antiquity. In the sixth century the Parthenon was consecrated as a Christian Greek Orthodox church.

Six hundred years later the archbishop of Athens would worship with his flock in the splendid edifice of Our Lady of Athens, a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary rather than the "false" Virgin Athena. The Parthenon's main structure had not been significantly altered, but Christianity had introduced notable changes inside. The entrance was moved and a wall built to enclose the spaces between the columns. A canopied altar was installed, surrounded by an apse that closed off the east entrance. The whole interior was redecorated with rich paintings and colorful mosaics.

Between 1204 and 1456 the Acropolis was occupied by a succession of European invaders,



THE ACROPOLIS CIRCA 1670

This drawing shows the Parthenon shortly before its destruction in 1687. It is still largely intact, with the roof in place and a minaret built on its side.

MICHEL URTADO/RMN-GRAN PALAIS

including the Franks and the Aragonese, before passing into the hands of a family of Florentine bankers, the Acciajuoli. During this time the Parthenon underwent yet another transformation, from Orthodox church to Catholic cathedral complete with the addition of a bell tower on its southwest side. By then a thousand years old, the Parthenon still drew great admiration: in 1395 Niccolò de Martoni recorded his impressions of the Parthenon in *The Pilgrimage Book*. Cyriacus of Ancona visited in 1436 and 1444, not only writing detailed descriptions of the building but also making many drawings.

Mosque, Fortress, and Arsenal

Not long after Cyriacus's last visit Athens changed hands again, as it fell to the Ottoman Turks. The Sultan Mehmed II—the conqueror of Constantinople—added the whole of Greece to his extensive European domains in the mid-15th century. Mehmed toured Athens and admired the classical splendor of the Acropolis. He also recognized its military value and had his soldiers garrisoned on the hill. He then imposed the Parthenon's third change of religion, making the Church of Our Lady a mosque. The bell tower became a minaret, lavish paintings and mosaics were whitewashed; and the altar was replaced with a *minbar,* or pulpit. The neighboring Erechtheum temple, which too had been made a church, was put to radically different use—as a harem.

Although the Acropolis was effectively closed to foreigners, some adventurous visitors gained access by bribing Turkish guards. Among them were two early pioneers of European tourism: Jacob Spon and George Wheler, who in 1675 described the Parthenon as "the finest mosque in the world." They were among the last to appreciate it intact, as war between the Ottomans and the Venetians sparked the greatest catastrophe in the monument's turbulent history.

The Venetian Republic had been fighting a long and sporadic war against the Ottoman Empire, and in September 1687 they occupied the slopes surrounding Athens as they laid siege to the city. Believing that Christians would never destroy a building that had been a famous

THE SPOILS OF VICTORY

As the Venetians retreated from Athens in 1687 they carried off booty including this marble lion. Nearly ten-feet tall it was taken from the nearby port of Piraeus and stood guard over the entrance to the arsenal in Venice.

C. CIABOCHI/AGE FOTOSTOCK

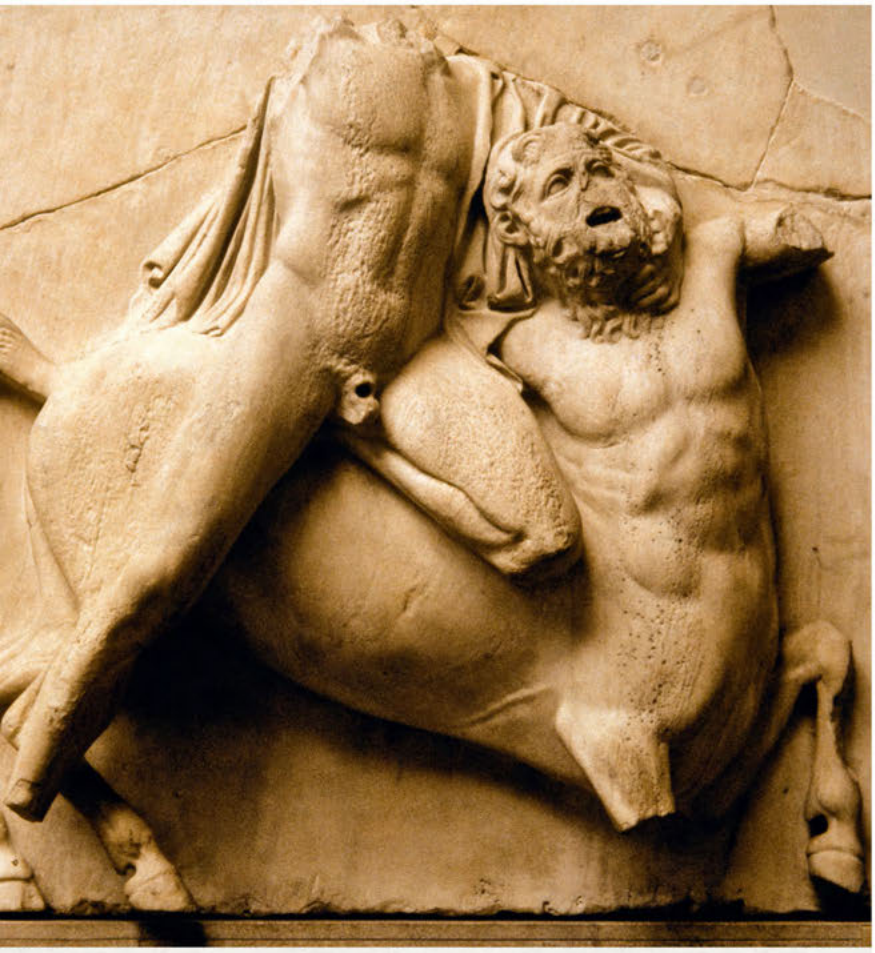




This 19th-century artist's impression of the Parthenon shows how it may have looked when the Acropolis and the city of Athens were at their most splendid, during the height of classical Greece.

RMN-GRAND PALAIS





PRISMA ARCHIVE



THE PARTHENON AND THE BRITISH MUSEUM

LORD ELGIN WAS British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 19th century. An avid art collector and lover of the classical world, Lord Elgin launched a single-minded campaign to gather the best of the surviving sculptures from the abandoned ruins of the Parthenon. Close relations with the Turkish authorities enabled him to ship the pieces to London. On their arrival in 1812, the "Elgin Marbles" stirred much admiration but also criticism—notably from Lord Byron, who considered their removal an act of looting. In 1816, deep in debt, Elgin sold his collection to the British government for only £35,000—half his asking price. That same year the collection found its permanent home in the British Museum. Since 1938 it has been displayed in the Duveen Gallery, named after the millionaire art dealer who financed it. The marbles make an impressive sight, and the room is one of the museum's most visited. However, some consider that it's time for these and other sculptures held in museums around the world to return to Greece.

PARTHENON METOPE DEPICTING THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN A CENTAUR AND A LAPITH, FROM THE SOUTHERN FRIEZE REMOVED BY LORD ELGIN AND DEPOSITED IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM IN 1816

church, the Turks used it for gunpowder storage and as a refuge for women and children. It was a tragic mistake. The Venetian general, a Swede named Otto Wilhelm Königsmarck, subjected the Acropolis to a merciless bombardment. On the evening of September 26 a mortar shell crashed through the roof of the Parthenon and triggered a colossal explosion.

The sight that greeted Athenians in the aftermath must have been pitiful. Having survived intact for 2,000 years, the Parthenon had been instantly reduced to rubble as the entire building blew outward. Only the two gable ends were left standing. The Turks withdrew two days later, but the Venetians found the city too unhealthy and costly to defend, so they abandoned Athens after just a few months—but not before they had plundered what they could from the rubble. Although attempts to remove the sculptures from the western gable failed, a great many other pieces of the temple were carried off to Venice. When the Turks returned, they re-established a garrison on the Acropolis and built a small mosque within the ruins.



Of the shattered statues that littered the Acropolis, the most intact were soon taken and reused in new constructions nearby. Smaller sculptures and fragments of the frieze were pilfered by rich tourists. These included the French ambassador, the Count of Choiseul-Gouffier. An avid collector of antiquities, he made off with a magnificent metope (square, sculpted panel) and a section of the Parthenon's frieze that is now on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Over the following decades deterioration and pillage led to the disappearance of almost all the treasures of the former Temple of Athena.

Rising from the Rubble

In the first decade of the 19th century, the British Ambassador in Istanbul, Lord Elgin, removed many of the remaining sculptures from the Parthenon. These included a large part of the frieze and the last of the beautiful statues adorning the eastern facade. His actions remain controversial and the subject of heated debate. Detractors argue that Lord Elgin robbed Athens of its classical heritage, but his defenders counter that by removing these deteriorating pieces he preserved them for posterity.

In 1832 Greece won its independence from the Ottoman Empire, and since then the nation has taken enormous pains to conserve the Acropolis, considered by all a symbol of their national identity. All the structures built after the classical period have been removed to help restore the site's dignity. In the 20th century many of the collapsed columns were reconstructed to rebuild the Parthenon's imposing outline. Thousands of fragments have been collected from the site and carefully curated. Many are now on display in the new Acropolis Museum, opened in 2009, which showcases the long and determined Greek-led efforts at restoration. Inside the museum there is a large, empty room that has been put aside for the day when the sculptures carved at the height of Athenian democracy will finally come home.

CARLOS GARCÍA GUAL
CARCÍA GUAL'S PASSION FOR ANCIENT GREECE HAS LED HIM TO WRITE BOOKS AS VARIED AS DICTIONARIES OF MYTHOLOGY AND TREATISES ON HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY.

THE FINAL BATTLE

During their long and bloody war of independence Greek troops laid siege to the Turkish garrison occupying the Acropolis (above) and even considered blowing it up.

CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

THE DAY THEY BLEW UP THE PARTHENON

In 1683 the Ottomans lifted their siege of Vienna, which led to a wholesale rolling back of their conquests in Europe. The Venetians joined the Austrians in a counteroffensive, sending soldiers to Greece under the command of Francesco Morosini. Between 1685 and 1687 Morosini occupied the principal strongholds of the Peloponnese, creating what was known as the Christian Despotate of the Morea. In September 1687 the Venetians received envoys from Athens who urged them to liberate the great city of classical antiquity from the Turks.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1687

1 BESIEGING THE ACROPOLIS

On September 21, 1687, a Venetian detachment disembarked at the port of Piraeus and marched on Athens under the command of the Swedish General Otto Wilhelm Königsmarck. The Turks, awaiting reinforcements, retreated to the Acropolis, where they urgently strengthened the exposed western flank of the fortress using materials taken from the temple of Athena Nike (rebuilt in 1838). Meanwhile, Königsmarck concentrated his heavy artillery on the Acropolis's vulnerable western side, placing 15 cannon on the slopes of the Pnyx, where democratic assemblies had once met, and five large-caliber mortar cannon on the Areopagus, a rocky area to the northwest. On September 23 the guns roared to life. The systematic pounding of the Acropolis had begun.

BOMBARDMENT OF THE PARTHENON IN 1687, ENGRAVING, FROM *ATENE ATTICA*, BY FRANCESCO FANELLI, VENICE, 1707



SEPTEMBER 26

2 FIRING THE FATAL SHOT

At nightfall on September 26, a Venetian mortar shell crashed through the roof of the Parthenon. It detonated the huge reserves of munitions that the Ottomans had stockpiled in the temple. The explosion tore the Parthenon in two, killing an estimated 300 Turks, whose bodies were found scattered over a wide area of the Acropolis. A German officer who witnessed the fighting recorded that the Venetians were deliberately targeting the Parthenon. He said that a few days earlier an informer had told the Venetians that the Parthenon was being used as an arsenal. The Ottomans had assumed that no Europeans would dare to fire on such an ancient and famous monument. They were wrong.

VIEW OF THE ACROPOLIS, 1863, WITH THE RUBBLE OF THE EXPLOSION STILL VERY MUCH EVIDENT. OIL PAINTING BY IPPOLITO CAFFI, MUSEUM OF CA' PESARO, VENICE





OCTOBER 4

APRIL 8, 1688

3 ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

When Venetian troops took control of the Acropolis a couple of days later, they could contemplate the true scale of the devastation they had inflicted on this icon of Greek civilization. The roof of the Parthenon had collapsed. Six columns on the southern side, eight on the north, and all but one on the western portico had collapsed. One witness noted, "Königsmarck's regret at having had to destroy this beautiful temple that had withstood 3,000 years of history. Nothing remained. The bombs had done their worst, and it could never be rebuilt." His victory had come at a great cost for Greece.



AN IRIS HEAD FROM THE WESTERN GABLE OF THE PARTHENON, BROUGHT TO VENICE IN 1687 AND NOW IN THE LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS, FRANCE

4 LOOTING THE REMAINS

Fortifying Athens against a Turkish counterattack proved too difficult, so the Venetians decided to abandon the city they had just won at such a terrible cost. Then the plundering began, with clear instructions received from the governor of Venice to "send us everything that you consider to be of the best quality, and of most artistic interest." A priority was the sculptures on the Parthenon's western gable, and especially the two horses pulling Athena's chariot. However, while attempting to remove these pieces they fell to the ground and shattered. The looting party did manage to remove many other major works of art, including the metopes (square, sculpted panels) that are today displayed in Copenhagen and Paris.

FRAGMENT FROM THE PARTHENON'S EASTERN FRIEZE, ACQUIRED BY THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1784. LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS



LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: BRIDGEMAN/ACI; CORDON PRESS; PHOTOAISA; WHITE IMAGES/SCALA, FLORENCE

PRAETORIANS: SWORDS OF THE EMPEROR

The Praetorian Guard were the elite of the Roman army, with privileges, prestige, and political power to match. As the emperor's personal bodyguards, they were obliged to die for his safety, but sometimes their loyalty extended only to the highest bidder.



This relief shows officers and soldiers of the Praetorian Guard wearing their parade uniforms. It might originally have decorated a triumphal arch built by the emperor Claudius in A.D. 51.

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM



PROTECTING THE PALACE

The imperial palace, the political heart of the empire, stood on the Palatine Hill, in Rome. It was protected day and night by the Praetorian Guard, who ensured the safety of the emperor and his family.

MAURIZIO RELLINI/FOTOTECA 9X12



The Rome of the emperors was not a safe place, especially if you were the emperor. A tradition of treachery and murder accompanied politics in a way that could see a ruler violently overthrown on the impulse of an individual or an angry mob. If you were unpopular, you really had to watch your back, or pay someone to watch it for you—the Praetorian Guard. These were the elite of the Roman military, a body of handpicked men who formed the personal bodyguard of the emperor and his family. These were not toy soldiers for palace guard duty but tough and trained fighting men as capable of breaking an enemy assault on the battlefield as stopping an assassin in the Senate. However, their services came at a price, and their loyalty was bought with hard cash. The Praetorian Guard's unique proximity to the emperor placed them at the heart of Roman politics, so that they often found themselves holding the delicate balance of power.

Emperor Augustus founded the Praetorian Guard in 27 or 26 B.C. It emerged from the bloodshed of the civil wars that had ended the republic and replaced it with an empire, in which one man ruled supreme. Initially the Praetorian Guard was made up of nine cohorts, military units of around 480 foot soldiers and 100 horsemen—called *equites pretoriani*. The numbers and composition fluctuated until the end of the first century A.D., when it was set at ten cohorts and it is likely that in the first half of the second century A.D. each cohort was strengthened to 1,000 men. Command of the guard was shared by two praetorian prefects, both experienced soldiers and members of Rome's equestrian order, the moneyed social class that held the most important positions in the government and the army.

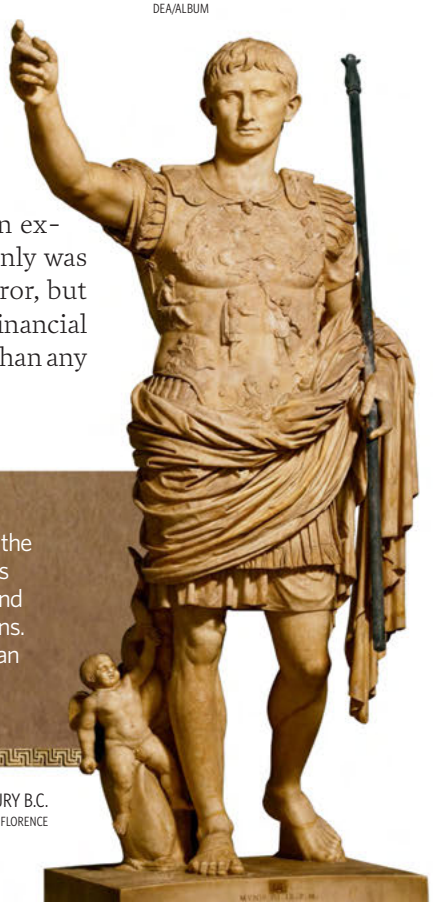
Favored by the Emperors

Joining the Praetorian Guard was an extremely attractive proposition. Not only was it a great honor to protect the emperor, but the position also brought significant financial benefits. Praetorians were paid more than any

DEFENDING THE REPUBLIC

Elite cohorts called praetorians had protected Rome's rulers since the founding of the republic, and some generals had their own praetorian units. These were the forerunners of the Praetorian Guard, whose standards embellish the coin (above).

DEA/ALBUM



STATUE OF AUGUSTUS FROM PRIMA PORTA. FIRST CENTURY B.C.
SCALA, FLORENCE

MASTERS OF THE EMPIRE

circa 27 B.C. Augustus founds the Praetorian Guard with men from his own army and Mark Antony's army.

A.D. 69 Vespasian appoints his son Titus as a prefect of the Praetorian Guard and reduces its numbers.

A.D. 217 The praetorian prefect Macrinus assassinates the emperor and seizes the imperial throne for a year.

A.D. 312 Constantine the Great defeats Maxentius and his praetorians. The Praetorian Guard is disbanded.



THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE

At the Battle of the Milvian Bridge Constantine the Great defeated the Praetorian Guard to win the imperial throne. He then disbanded the unit and forbade former praetorians from approaching within a hundred miles of Rome. The Arch of Constantine was built to celebrate this victory.

K. KAMINESKY/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

other unit in the Roman army. At the end of Augustus's reign their basic annual pay was 3,000 sesterces, whereas an ordinary legionary earned just 900. In addition, emperors also showered them with gifts at important occasions, such as coronations, victorious campaigns, and special celebrations. When the army as a whole was rewarded, the Praetorians usually received a greater share. In his will Augustus bequeathed 300 sesterces to every legionary but 1,000 sesterces to each praetorian. When they came to power, many emperors gave the guard generous gifts, buying the loyalty of the men to whom they entrusted their lives. Claudius gave them 15,000 sesterces each; and in the second century A.D. Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus gave them 20,000. However, like the legionaries, the praetorians had to deposit part of their pay and half of any gifts in their unit's coffers, which acted like a bank, with the soldiers' savings being returned when they were discharged.

Costs like food were normally deducted from legionaries' pay, but the Praetorian Guard had special privileges. They were usually billeted in the imperial capital, where wheat, a staple food, was handed out free of charge. Nor did they pay for their arms or armor, and members of the cavalry corps were provided with their horses and fodder. Praetorians only served for 16 years, compared with the legionary's 20, although they were forbidden from marrying while serving. They were also granted certain legal advantages, such as the right to be prosecuted within their own camp and speedier trials when they were plaintiffs. Upon retirement each guardsman was given a piece of tax-free land or a lump sum of cash (20,000 sesterces under Tiberius, A.D. 14–37). On top of all this came the considerable prestige and social status they enjoyed.

Making the Grade

The Praetorian Guard typically recruited civilian volunteers between 17 and 20, over five feet eight inches tall, and in excellent physical condition. They had to present letters of recommendation, and each man was carefully vetted, with close scrutiny paid to their status as Roman citizens. During the first two centuries, most recruits came from the center and north of the Italian peninsula, as well as from Hispania (Spain), Macedonia (northern Greece), and Noricum (central Austria and parts of Germany, Italy, and Slovenia). Septimius Severus (A.D. 193–211) reformed the entire army, and thereafter praetorians were only drawn from serving soldiers stationed around the empire.

New recruits were sent to a dedicated camp called castra praetoria, built to the northeast of Rome in A.D. 23. After completing their training, praetorians might be assigned to a variety of tasks, but their essential role was to protect the emperor wherever he was—whether in his palace, moving around the city, or traveling across the empire. Every day a cohort of praetorians marched to the imperial palace, on the Palatine Hill, to stand guard. Inside the palace they wore togas with swords hidden in their folds. At the Senate they were usually stationed outside



THE ASSASSINATION OF CALIGULA AND HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER. OIL PAINTING BY LAZZARO BALDI, 17TH CENTURY, GALLERIA SPADA, ROME

DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

KILLING CALIGULA

CASSIUS CHAEREA, a praetorian tribune, plotted with other guardsmen to assassinate the hated Caligula. The emperor had apparently mocked Chaerea, calling him effeminate and making him use obscene passwords. According to Suetonius, "while [Caligula] was on the ground, they finished him off by stabbing him 30 times." It was not only the emperor who was killed: "His wife Caesonia perished with him . . . as did his daughter, who was dashed against the wall."

EQUIPPED FOR BATTLE

Helmets like this were common in the legions at the end of the first century B.C. A crest was attached to the top, and the helmet included fittings for additional plates to protect the cheeks and neck.



AGE FOTOSTOCK

NERO KNEELS OVER THE BODY OF HIS MURDERED MOTHER, AGRIPPINA, IN THIS 19TH- CENTURY PAINTING BY ANTONIO RIZZI.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

NERO AND HIS PRAETORIAN PREFECTS

Nero's reign exemplifies the political influence exerted by the Praetorian Guard and especially its leaders, the praetorian prefects. When Claudius died in A.D. 54, the prefect Afranius Burrus made the guards swear loyalty to Nero as the new emperor. Burrus became an influential figure in Nero's government but was eventually poisoned, possibly by the emperor. This and Nero's many other despotic acts, including murdering his own mother, pushed many praetorians to question and oppose his rule. Some took part in Gaius Calpurnius Piso's failed plot against the emperor in A.D. 65. The conspirators were brutally punished by the new praetorian prefect, Tigellinus, and Nero gave the remaining praetorians 500 denarii each in an attempt to buy their loyalty. Three years later Tigellinus's co-prefect, Nymphidius Sabinus, promised every praetorian 7,500 denarii to betray Nero and support Galba, although he actually planned to make himself emperor. Tigellinus saw that Nero was a lost cause, and so declared his loyalty first to Galba, and then to Otho, who ruled for just three months. Nymphidius was assassinated by his own praetorians, and Otho had Tigellinus executed.



W. FORMAN/GTRES



BRIDGEMAN/ACI

▲ **RECONSTRUCTED MARBLE BUST** OF NERO FROM THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

◀ **NERO,** WITH TIGELLINUS BESIDE HIM, DELIVERING A SPEECH TO THE PRAETORIANS, ON A FIRST-CENTURY A.D. COIN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

the building, but Emperor Caligula (A.D. 37–41) allowed them to stand guard inside as well.

Personal Protection

Some emperors developed an almost paranoid obsession with their personal safety. Claudius (A.D. 41–54) was afraid to attend banquets unless he was surrounded by armed guards and insisted that all visitors should be thoroughly searched—with no exceptions. If he visited the sick, he ensured that their bedrooms were carefully examined, including checking the mattresses and shaking out blankets. When Claudius learned of his wife's adultery with Gaius Silius, he fled and took refuge in the praetorian camp, fearing that Silius was about to overthrow him.

Sometimes the emperor's safety could be seriously compromised. The eccentric Nero (A.D. 54–68) would go on nocturnal wanderings around the streets of Rome. One night he was almost beaten to death by a senator for having taken liberties with the man's wife. Consequently, he was followed at a distance by praetorian tribunes. A bandit and former soldier called Maternus plotted to kill the emperor Commodus (A.D. 177–192). Maternus's gang planned to disguise themselves as praetorians during a spring festival, but the plot was betrayed and Maternus was beheaded.

The Praetorian Guard escorted the emperor whenever and wherever he traveled, such as Nero's journeys through Greece and the frequent tours of the provinces made by Hadrian (A.D. 117–138). A detachment always traveled ahead of the imperial cavalcade to clear the way and neutralize threats. On one occasion Tiberius was traveling through Italy when the litter in which he was being carried became entangled in some blackberry bushes. The enraged emperor threw the scout responsible to the ground and flogged him almost to death.

From Bodyguard to Battlefield

The praetorians performed a number of ceremonial duties, including acting as the honor guard at official events, such as victory parades, ambassador receptions, and imperial birthday celebrations. As a final act of loyalty the guard formed the emperor's funeral cortege. They were also responsible for keeping order in Rome. They helped the *vigiles* (firemen) put out fires, investigated plots against the emperor, and put down rebellions. Their duties included guarding the prison and carrying out orders of execution. They also stood guard during public entertainments such as theatrical performances, gladiatorial games, and chariot races. Sometimes they even took part; once Emperor Claudius ordered praetorian cavalry to fight against African animals in the Circus Maximus.

Despite sometimes being mocked for enjoying a more decadent lifestyle, the Praetorian Guard was a real fighting force. Their military equipment was essentially the same as that of the legions, with just a few decorative differences. Praetorian shields bore special emblems such as winged lightning, the moon and stars, and the scorpion; their standard-bearers carried banners depicting the emperor and wore a lion's skin as a hooded cloak instead of



MB CREATIVITAT

THE PRAETORIAN CAMPS

THE PRAETORIAN GUARD had a number of camps around Rome. The main camp was the castra praetoria northeast of Rome, near the Viminal Hill. Its 42 acres were encircled by an 11-foot high wall with a string of towers. There was a two-story barracks capable of housing an estimated 12,000 men. Outside the walls was a large training field that was also used for parades and religious ceremonies.

A PRAETORIAN REMEMBERED

This funerary stela was erected in memory of the praetorian Pomponius Proculus. It shows him dressed in his uniform and fully armed for battle.

DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK





TRAJAN'S CAMP

Trajan's Column, in Rome, celebrates the emperor's campaigns against the Dacians (A.D. 101 and 106). Several praetorians are portrayed on the monument, suggesting they had played an important role in the campaign.

AKG/ALBUM

the usual bearskin. In addition to protecting the emperor while on campaign, the Praetorian Guard was sometimes ordered into action. At the beginning of his reign Tiberius sent his younger brother to lead the trusted praetorians in putting down revolts by the legions in the central European provinces of Germania and Pannonia. The praetorians also fought under Trajan (A.D. 98-117) in the Dacian Wars and helped defeat the Germanic peoples during Marcus Aurelius's reign (A.D. 161-180). Even senior officers found themselves exposed to real danger. While in the service of Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) the praetorian prefect Cornelius Fuscus was killed in battle.

Praetorian Plots

The privileged position of the Praetorian Guard, so close to the emperor, gave them considerable political influence. Coupled with their military strength, this made them a powerful force in Rome. It placed the praetorians at the center of the frequent intrigues and rebellions against emperors—often foiling them but sometimes supporting them. In A.D. 192 Commodus was murdered. The praetorians' preferred choice of emperor was Pertinax, an elderly senator. However, when they realized that he was planning to curb their excessive power, the guards used their unrivaled access to assassinate Pertinax.

The praetorian prefects then literally auctioned off the office of emperor, announcing from the walls of their camp that the imperial throne was up for sale and would go to the highest bidder. A former consul named Didius Julianus—clearly not considering the risks that such a deal entailed—promised the praetorians a vast amount of money and guaranteed them free reign to do as they wished. The praetorians accepted his bid and escorted Julianus to the imperial palace amid heavy security.

His rule was indeed short-lived. Soon afterward the general Septimius Severus arrived in Rome, having been proclaimed emperor by the legions of Illyria (northwest Balkans). Severus ordered Julianus's execution, just three months after his accession to the throne, and invited the Praetorian Guard to swear loyalty to him instead. They were commanded to leave their weapons in camp but instead they paraded in full dress uniform. Severus had them arrested and expelled from Rome. From then on praetorians were recruited from among the border legions. Despite this, the guard's meddling continued, and at the beginning of the fourth century they put Maxentius on the imperial throne. He and his praetorians were defeated by Constantine at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, in A.D. 312. Constantine decided to disband the guard for good. He ordered that no former praetorian be allowed within a hundred miles of Rome and stripped the praetorian prefects of any military authority. Thus ended three centuries of glory and shame, heroism and disloyalty—the legacy of the elite corps entrusted to protect the emperors of Rome. ■

FERNANDO LILLO REDONET
LILLO REDONET IS AN EXPERT IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLDS AND THEIR PORTRAYAL ON SCREEN.



PRAETORIANS FALL IN THE TIBER DURING THE BATTLE OF THE MILVIAN BRIDGE. OIL PAINTING BY PIETER LASTMAN, 1613

AKG/ALBUM

FINAL DEFEAT AT THE TIBER

IN 312 Constantine fought Maxentius, his rival for the imperial throne. Their armies met at the Milvian Bridge, which crossed the Tiber about two miles from Rome. Maxentius had constructed a pontoon bridge to allow more troops to cross the river. On October 28 his army, including the Praetorian Guard, was defeated. During the hurried and disorderly retreat the pontoon bridge collapsed, drowning Maxentius and many praetorians.

CONSTANTINE'S REVENGE

After disbanding the Praetorian Guard, Constantine (below) probably replaced it with his own personal guard, the *Scholae Palatinae*. This military order survived into the 11th century.

AGE FOTOSTOCK



INSIGNIA OF THE PRAETORIAN GUARD

Experts think the praetorians wore the same standardized military equipment as ordinary legionaries. Their weapons, helmets, and shields followed the prevailing styles of the time. However, their shields and standards bore distinctive decorative features to distinguish them from ordinary soldiers of Rome.





1 *Flag or vexillum*

A square flag was hung from a spear and crossbar, probably bearing the unit's number and title. It was used by both cavalry and infantry detachments.

2 *Dress helmet*

Ancient reliefs differ in their depictions of the Praetorian Guard in a way that suggests they wore the standard legionary helmet of the time. This reconstruction is based on a relief now in the Louvre.

3 *Shield or scutum*

Both the *cancellaria* and *puteo* shields appear on ancient reliefs and are here depicted with the praetorian motifs of scorpions on the cancellaria and lightning, stars, and moons on the puteo.

4 *Standard or signum*

Each *centuria* (around 100 men) carried a *signum,* or standard, bearing its particular honors. The *signa* of the Praetorian Guard were elaborately decorated, making them extremely heavy.



Umbo, a metal boss in the middle of the wooden shield

3



3

4



Civic crown with oak leaves

Eagle inside a torque, or honorary collar

Winged deity, probably the goddess Victoria

Mural crown commemorating the capture of an important city

Picture of the emperor, probably Domitian

A scorpion, one of the praetorian's distinctive symbols

Inscription saying "Praetorian Cohort III"

Civic crown

Picture of Vespasian, the emperor's father

Civic crown

The *signum* was thrust into the ground; an iron handle was used to help pull it out.



4

ILLUSTRATIONS: SANTI PÉREZ

NORSE AMERICA

During the ninth century Nordic seafarers left their native Scandinavia in search of new lands to colonize. Some sailed west across the North Atlantic, island hopping into the unknown until they chanced upon a land full of vines—the coast of the New World.





Viking ships on coins (opposite) minted at the beginning of the ninth century were found in Sweden's Birka market.

WERNER FORMAN/GTRES

This warrior figure is carved from elk horn. Contrary to popular belief the Vikings did not wear horned helmets.

BELZEAUX/RAPHO/CONTACTO PHOTO

Vikings Across the Ocean

985
Viking trader Bjarni Herjólfsson, driven off course on his way to Greenland, sights what some consider was the coast of the New World.

986
Erik the Red, who had already left his native Norway to live in Iceland, starts colonizing Greenland, the starting point for voyages to America.

1000
Leif Eriksson the Lucky, Erik the Red's son, sets sail in a *knarr* with 35 crewmen. They reach America by chance and call the place Vinland.

1003
Thorvald Eriksson, Leif's brother, also travels to America and decides to settle there but is later killed in a fight with indigenous people.

CIRCA 1006
Thorfinn Karlsefni attempts to establish a colony on the American coast. He arrives with three ships, 150 colonists, and livestock.

CIRCA 1008
Snorri, Thorfinn Karlsefni's son, is the first child of European parents to be born in America.

1347
The Annals of Iceland record the last known voyage to America by Scandinavian sailors.

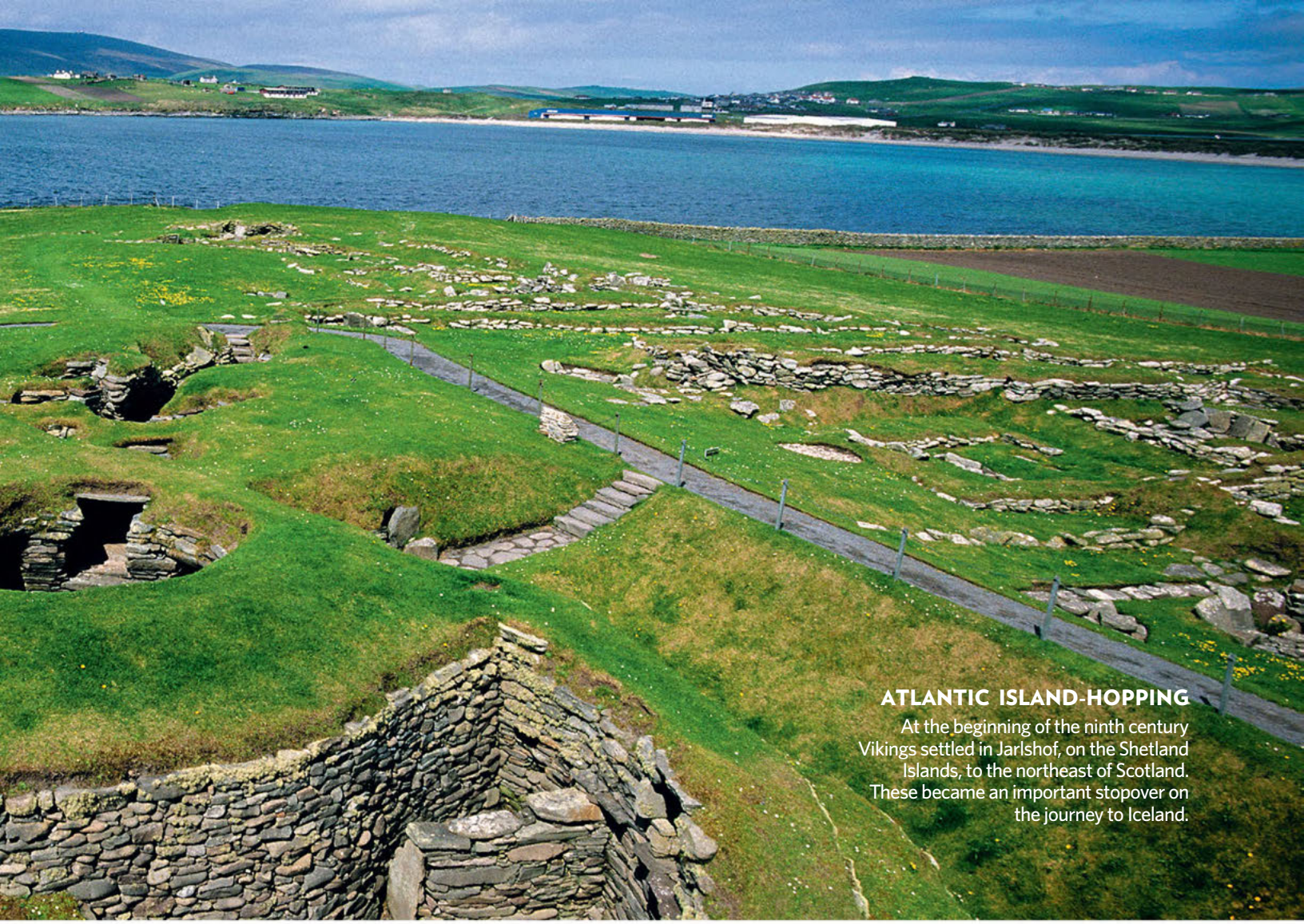


ICELAND TO GREENLAND TO VINLAND
Having reached and settled Greenland, Vikings would inevitably continue farther west to America.
AKG/ALBUM

"In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the Ocean blue," says the poem. He certainly did, but he was not the first to reach the New World: Humankind had discovered the continent on at least three separate occasions. The first was thousands of years ago when an anonymous Asian hunter crossed into what is now Alaska—although he didn't know it, he was making history. In 1492 Christopher Columbus famously claimed the New World for Spain, fundamentally changing the history of the continent. But in between these momentous events came "Lucky" Leif Eriksson, the Viking renegade who accidentally landed in America around 1000.

That first Asian hunter was driven by his constant struggle for survival, pursuing migrating animals across the land bridge





ATLANTIC ISLAND-HOPPING
At the beginning of the ninth century Vikings settled in Jarlshof, on the Shetland Islands, to the northeast of Scotland. These became an important stopover on the journey to Iceland.

BERTRAND RIEGER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

that then joined the continents. By contrast, Columbus set off on a deliberate voyage of discovery—even if the land he encountered wasn't what he set out to find. But Leif Eriksson's landing was the culmination of a chain of events that saw a group of Vikings become the first Europeans to set foot in America.

The Scandinavians expanded into the North Atlantic through different islands—the Hebrides, Iceland, and Greenland—on their route to finally reach America. One of their ships was blown westward by a storm and they found new land by chance. This was followed by a planned exploration and a study to determine the feasibility of settling there. Deciding that it was possible and desirable, a group was organized to sail west and colonize these new shores.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

This intricate 13th-century carving shows Sigurd, a hero of ancient Scandinavian sagas. It was found in Norway, where most of Vinland's colonists probably originated.

WERNER FORMAN/GTRES



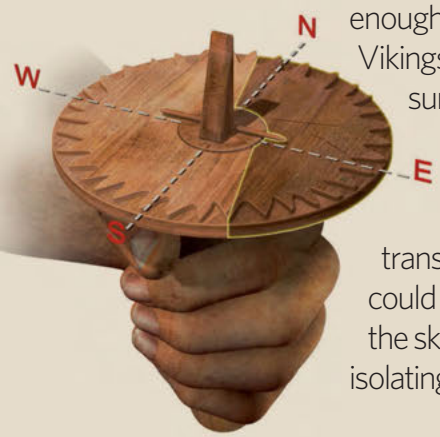
North Atlantic Colonists

Around the year 800, Norwegians started to build settlements on what they called the "Sheep Islands," or the Faroe Islands, north of Scotland. They were later joined by Scandinavian seafarers from colonies in the Hebrides, west of Scotland; as the communities thrived, the Vikings made an expansionary leap from the Faroe Islands to Iceland. The first Viking to set his eyes on this island was a Swede called Naddoddur who sailed around what he called "Snowland" in about 850. It was a Norwegian, Flóki Vilgerðarson, who settled the territory and named it Iceland. Permanent colonization began in 874, when Ingólfr Arnason established what would eventually become today's capital, Reykjavík.

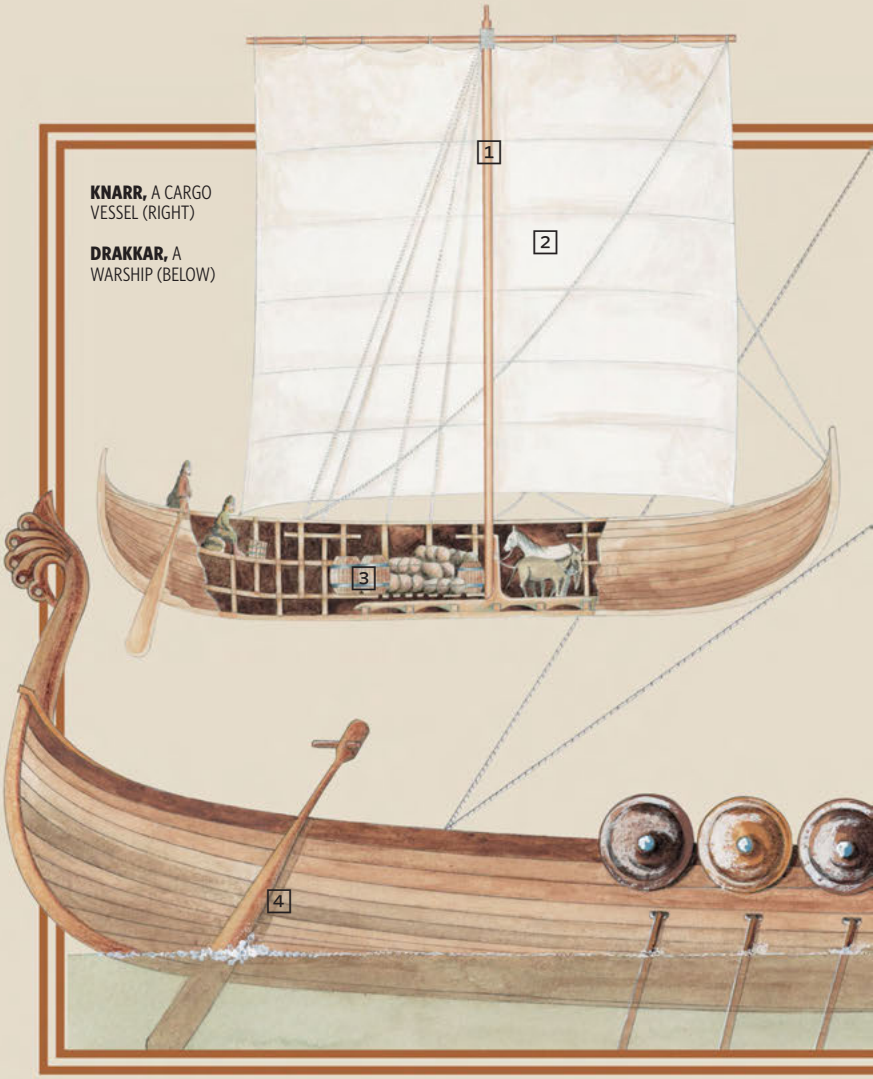
Once the Vikings were firmly established in Iceland, Greenland became their next step, the result of an

SHIPS FOR EXPLORATION, TRADE, OR WAR

The Vikings used two types of oceangoing ships: the *knarr* and the *drakkar*. In 1962 archaeologists discovered an 11th-century knarr they named the *Skuldelev 1*. Designed for transporting goods, animals, and passengers, studies show that knarrs were certainly strong enough to sail to America. The Vikings could navigate by the sun and stars and used sundials (left). The sagas say they also used "sunstones," translucent crystals that could locate the sun when the sky was overcast by isolating its unpolarized light.



FRAGMENT OF SOLAR COMPASS FOUND IN GREENLAND, CIRCA 1000
SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/AGE FOTOSTOCK



THE EPIC VIKING SAGAS

Strictly speaking, a saga is a story of legendary or historical fiction built around key characters or heroes from Iceland. Originally, sagas were told around the campfire, but later many were written down for posterity.



BRIDGEMAN/ACI

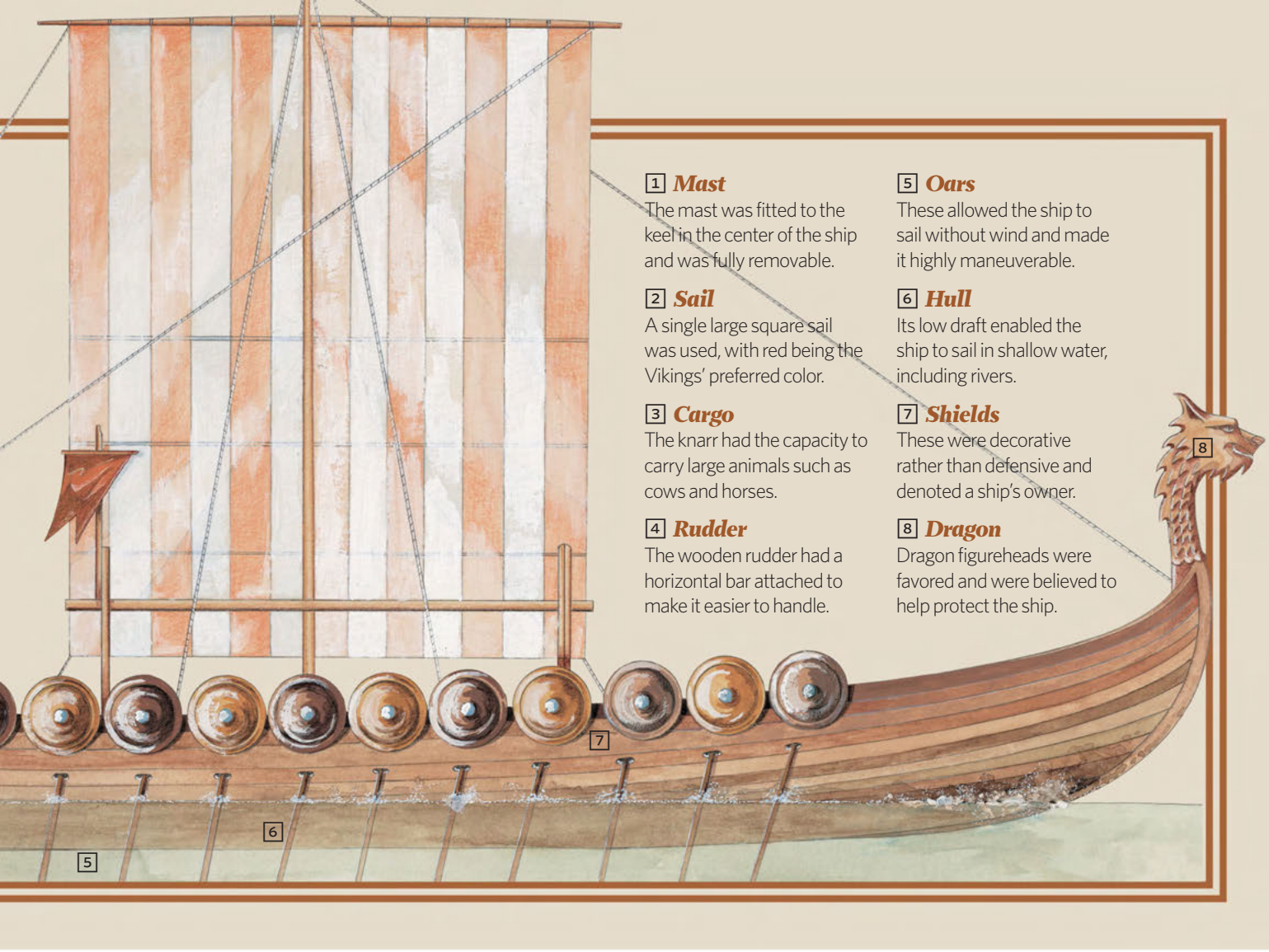
unexpected encounter: Gunnbjörn Ulfsson, a Norwegian-born sailor blown off course during a storm on a voyage to Iceland, saw it around 930. The land was re-discovered in 981 by Hrölf Thorbjarnarson and Sneabjörn Holmsteinsson, who spent a winter on small islands off its coast. A year later Erik Thorvaldsson, better known as the infamous "Erik the Red," arrived on its shores and established the island's first settlement.

Erik had become an outlaw, exiled from Iceland for three years after a series of violent killings. In the summer of 982 he set sail for Greenland in a small cargo ship called a *knarr*. Once his exile was over, Erik returned to Iceland with a plan to colonize the new territory. He enthusiastically spread the word about the island's virtues, calling it "green" to make it more attractive. His marketing worked, and Erik assembled 25 ships to carry a large number of families to their new home. As many as 14 ships arrived safely, and some 400 colonists settled in a location Erik had chosen that he'd called Brattahlid, at the end of a long, deep fjord that made a good anchorage. It was from here that most of the Vikings' subsequent explorations of Vinland set sail.

America Found, Lost, and Found

Once the Scandinavians had settled on the west coast of Greenland it was almost inevitable that they would reach America. There was a busy trade between the various Viking settlements in the North Atlantic and the distance between Greenland and America is relatively small. There are two Viking sources that describe their experiences in Vinland: the *Saga of the Greenlanders,* and the *Saga of Erik the Red.* Both were written sometime during the 13th century but present different accounts of events.

According to the *Saga of the Greenlanders,* Vinland was discovered in two stages. In



ILLUSTRATIONS: MB CREATIVITAT

the first, Bjarni Herjólfsson, a Scandinavian trader, was heading from Norway to Iceland when he learned that his father had gone with Erik the Red to Greenland that year, probably 985 or 986. Bjarni set sail again and for three days made toward Greenland without any trouble. But then "a north wind rose together with fog and they knew neither where they were nor where they were headed." When they finally sighted land, Bjarni suspected it was not Greenland, as it did not match any description he had heard. He decided not to go ashore.

The second stage of the exploration took place 15 years later, when people in Greenland were discussing the possibility of finding somewhere new to colonize. Leif Eriksson, one of Erik the Red's sons, decided to search for the land Bjarni had encountered. He bought the trader's boat and raised a 35-man crew. When he reached the place Bjarni had sighted, Leif found a barren landscape covered with stones that he called Helluland or "flat rock land." He sailed on and reached a flat, forested coast he called Markland or "forest land." Finally he found dew-covered grassland where he and his men built houses and stayed for the winter. Exploring the area, they found large grapevines, so Leif named the place Vinland, or "wine land." On his return voyage, believed to have happened around 1000, Leif is said to have rescued some shipwrecked Norsemen and was thereafter nicknamed "Leif the Lucky."

IRON TOOLS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC
This carving from Hylestad, Norway, shows a Viking blacksmith at work. The iron tools found by archaeologists in America point to a Viking presence in the New World.



ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

Keeping it in the Family

The *Saga of Erik the Red,* however, claims it was Leif Eriksson himself who first discovered Vinland. It says that Leif was in Norway with King Olaf Tryggvason some-



THE HOUSE OF THE VIKINGS
Replicas of Viking dwellings have been built at L'Anse Aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, the archaeological site that contains the remains of their original homes, as well as four workshops and a forge.

A NEW FOUND LAND

VIKING FOOTPRINT IN L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS

In 1959, after visiting Greenland, the Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad decided to search for signs that the Vikings had sailed as far as America. He systematically conducted archaeological digs along the American coastline and uncovered the ruins of Nordic settlements in the far north of Newfoundland, next to the village of L'Anse aux Meadows. Ingstad and his archaeologist wife excavated the site until 1968, finding the remains of eight buildings and a sufficient number of objects to prove they had been inhabited by Nordic people around A.D. 1000. The houses were built with wooden frameworks covered with turf, in the same manner used in 10th-century Iceland. They recovered over a hundred items: nails, a bronze brooch, glass beads, bone needles, files, and scissors. There were also the remains of a workshop where ships were repaired and a forge.



TENTH-CENTURY HELMET FOUND IN GJERMUNDBU, NORWAY
PHOTOAISA

time around 995-1000. When the king learned that Leif intended to return to Greenland, he gave him the mission of converting the island's pagan inhabitants to Christianity. The saga then describes Leif's voyage home as occurring in much the same way as Herjólfsson's in the *Saga of the Greenlanders*.

The sagas describe several more planned expeditions to Vinland. Thorvald Eriksson was next to try his luck, borrowing his brother's boat and reaching the new land without any mishaps. Thorvald and his men spent two years systematically exploring the surrounding area and planning its colonization. "This is a good land," Thorvald apparently exclaimed, "and I want my farm to be here." However, shortly afterward they fought a large band of Native Americans. Thorvald was killed and buried in the place where he had hoped to build his farm. Thorstein, another of Leif's brothers, led



DE AGOSTINI



LEIF ERIKSSON SIGHTS THE NEW WORLD IN A 19TH-CENTURY PAINTING BY CHRISTIAN KROHG.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

the next voyage. Using the same boat as the previous expedition, he lost his bearings and spent the whole summer sailing between Greenland, Iceland, and Ireland. As winter approached he gave up and returned home.

A third expedition was led by Thorfinn Karlsefni, a rich Icelandic merchant who planned to colonize Vinland. He sailed with three ships carrying 150 colonists and plenty of livestock, but the settlement lasted less than three years. They were forced out after repeated battles with the natives, whom the Scandinavians nicknamed *skrælings*. Before they left, however, Thorfinn's wife gave birth to their son Snorri, making him the first known European to be born in America.

According to the *Saga of the Greenlanders,* a final expedition was carried out by Freydis, who was most likely the illegitimate daughter of Erik the Red. She probably used the old family boat that by then had sailed to Vinland three or four times. Freydis was joined by two brothers, Helge and Finboge, who had acquired a larger and faster ship. This seems to have been their undoing, as Freydis may have killed both brothers and their 28 crewmen to take it for herself. The saga tells that Freydis's henchmen refused to murder five women who were also on board, so Freydis took up an ax and she slaughtered them. She then abandoned the family knarr and returned to Greenland in the new ship, claiming that the others had stayed to explore Vinland.

The Legend Lives On

According to the sagas Vinland was first sighted more than a thousand years ago, but tales of its discovery were not written down until the 13th century. The earliest surviving manuscripts date from the 14th century, so there is nearly a 400-year gap between the first voyages to Vinland and the earliest

LIFE AND DEATH IN VINLAND

According to Nordic legends, the Vikings tried to colonize America several times, but they never managed to hold out against its indigenous people for more than three years.



A GREAT FAKE?

THE FIRST MAP OF VINLAND

The "Map of Vinland" was donated to Yale University in 1965 as proof that the Vikings had reached America. It was apparently part of the Tartar Relation, a medieval codex that some scholars believe may have come from a Spanish monastery. It shows the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia (not shown here), and some islands. These include Greenland and, to its west, an island with two fjords cutting into it that is identified as Vinland. The accuracy with which Greenland is drawn has made many scholars skeptical, as they do not believe that it could have been rendered so perfectly in the 15th century, especially when it was only circumnavigated for the first time in the 20th century. The authenticity of the map is still questioned, but it is now accepted as indisputable fact that Scandinavians sailed to America in the early decades of the 11th century.



DETAIL FROM THE "MAP OF VINLAND", YALE UNIVERSITY
BRIDGEMAN/ACI

documents of its existence. The two sagas are the only medieval texts that describe the expeditions to Vinland, but others mention it in passing. In the *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (circa 1073) the German priest Adam of Bremen says that the Danish king told him about "another island of the many found in that ocean. It is called Vinland because vines producing excellent wine grow wild there." Vinland is also referenced in the *Book of Icelanders,* a history of Iceland written around 1130. It links the name of Vinland with the colonization of Greenland by Erik the Red, "14 or 15 years before Christianity reached Iceland." This happened in the summer of 1000, dating the settlement of Greenland to 985 or 986.

Beyond the sagas, no further attempts to colonize Vinland are recorded, but that does not mean the Scandinavians abandoned it altogether. They are likely to have arranged occasional expeditions to bring back wood,



PETER ESSICK

an important raw material that Greenland was unable to produce. Sources also tell of Viking hunting expeditions in the arctic areas of Canada and the north of Greenland. In the *Annals of Greenland,* written in 1625, an Icelander called Björn Jonsson claims that, "All major landowners in Greenland had large ships and vessels built to send all sorts of hunting equipment to places in the north." Björn Jonsson mentions some of the places to which these expeditions headed including Nordseta and Greipar.

Tracing the Sagas

Throughout the 1970s the Danish archaeologist Peter Schledermann conducted a series of research projects in Inuit settlements on the east cost of Ellesmere Island, Canada. During his excavations he unearthed 25 items of Scandinavian origin. The finds include two pieces of fabric, dated to the mid-13th century, boat rivets, a carpenter's plane, and a piece of chain mail. And Robert McGhee from the Canadian Museum of Civilization has also found various Viking implements, on Bathurst Island in northern Canada. These are some of the tangible remains of Scandinavian expeditions to America a thousand years ago, and they testify to the Vikings being the first Europeans to deliberately try to colonize the New World some 500 years before Columbus claimed it for the Spanish Crown. ■

EDUARDO MORALES ROMERO
MORALES ROMERO HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS LIFE IN SCANDINAVIA INVESTIGATING ITS VIKING PAST.

Learn more

BOOKS

Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga
Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward, Smithsonian Books, 2004.

The Age of the Vikings
Anders Winroth, Princeton University Press, 2014.

The Sea Wolves: A History of the Vikings
Lars Brownworth, Crux Publishing, 2014.

ERIK THE RED IN GREENLAND

Brattahlid, the largest Viking site in Greenland, was founded around 986 by Erik the Red. He was devoted to the pagan Viking religion, but his wife, Thjodhild, converted to Christianity and built a turf church (reproduction above) around 1001.

THE EPIC OF THE NORTH: FROM



The search for new lands to settle led the Scandinavians to America, which they reached through a series of expeditions that carried them far from their ancestral homes. These long and dangerous voyages were made possible by their swift, robust knarrs. By combining sail and oars, these ships were highly maneuverable, able to tack and sail close to the wind.



VIKING SHIPS, OIL PAINTING BY HANS GUDE, 1889

SCANDINAVIA TO AMERICA



1 *Scandinavia*

The Vikings included Norwegians, who mainly colonized the northernmost Atlantic islands; Swedes, who explored Russia and Byzantium; and Danes, who focused on Britain.

2 *Iceland*

Approximately 900 miles from the coast of Norway, it would have taken Viking ships between a week and a month to reach Iceland. The island's colonization was completed around 930.

3 *Greenland*

Erik the Red led the settlement of the vast island of Greenland. He settled in Brattahlid, the center of the eastern colony, where Viking ships would set sail for the coast of America.

4 *America*

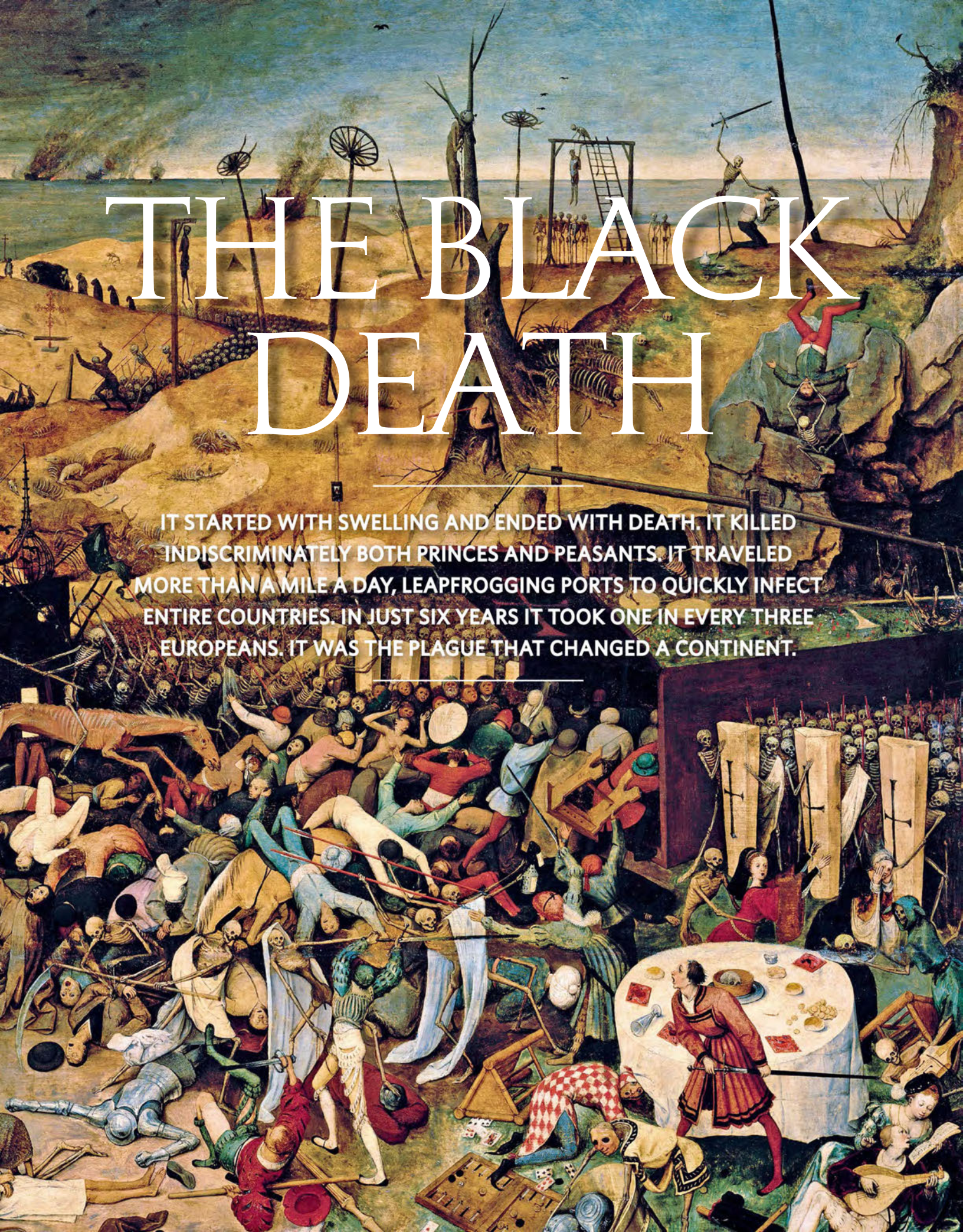
L'Anse aux Meadows was the first confirmed Viking settlement found in America. It's likely that clashes with indigenous people and bad weather may have driven the Vikings to finally leave.

CARTOGRAPHY: EOSGIS.COM; PAINTING: BRIDGEMAN/ACI



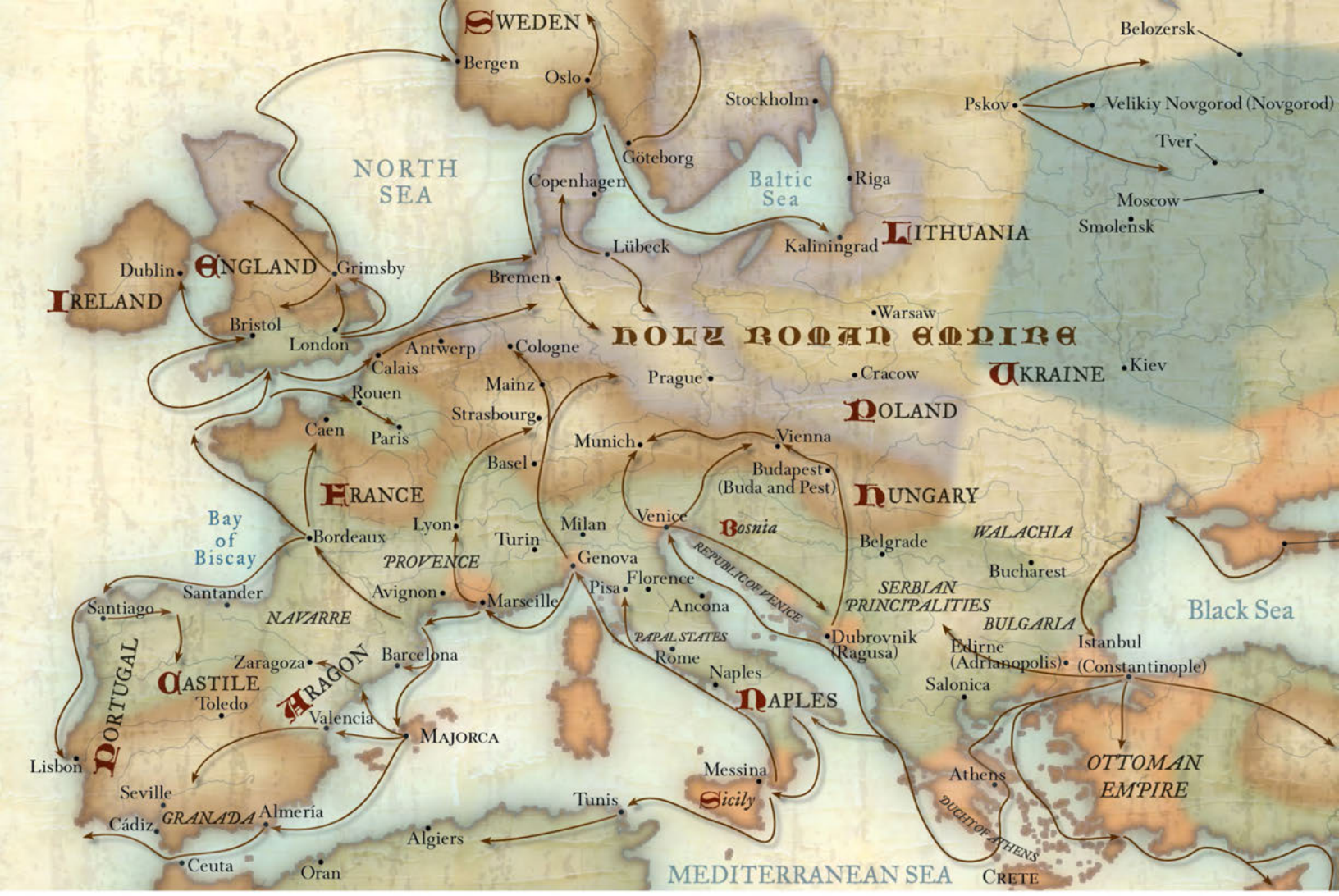
This 1562 painting, "The Triumph of Death," by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, illustrates the deep impression left on the European imagination by the epidemics and wars that ravaged society.

ORONOZ/ALBUM



THE BLACK DEATH

IT STARTED WITH SWELLING AND ENDED WITH DEATH. IT KILLED INDISCRIMINATELY BOTH PRINCES AND PEASANTS. IT TRAVELED MORE THAN A MILE A DAY, LEAPFROGGING PORTS TO QUICKLY INFECT ENTIRE COUNTRIES. IN JUST SIX YEARS IT TOOK ONE IN EVERY THREE EUROPEANS. IT WAS THE PLAGUE THAT CHANGED A CONTINENT.



THE ORIGINS OF THE EPIDEMIC

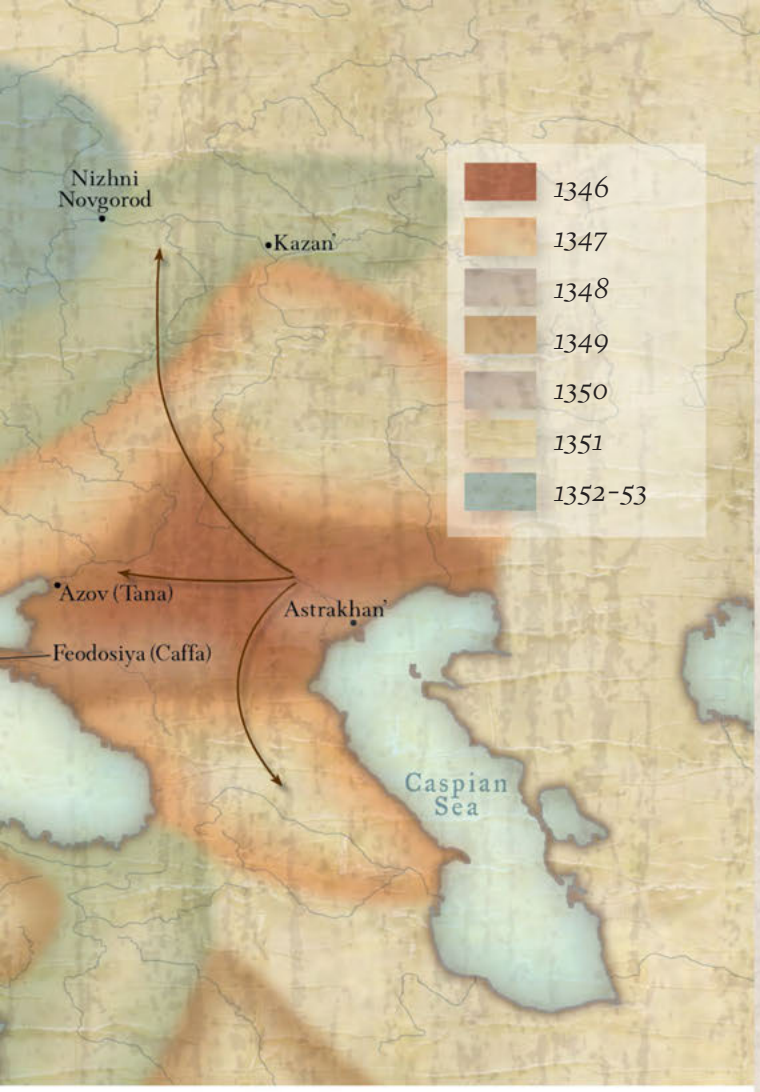
The Arab author Ibn al-Wardi suggests that the plague originated in the "Land of Darkness"—in modern-day Uzbekistan, then part of the Mongolian khanate of the Golden Horde.

Sometime in 1347 a sailing ship moored in a Mediterranean port unwittingly unleashed one of the most destructive pathogens in history. Unloaded with its cargo and passengers were some deadly stowaways: flea-ridden black rats carrying the bubonic plague. It was a scenario played out many times in ports all around Europe, and the results were always the same: Sickness, suffering, and death on what seemed a cataclysmic scale. The years 1347-1353 saw Europe in the terrifying grip of the worst pandemic it had ever suffered: At least one-third of Europe's population died from what became known as the Black Death.

Most historians agree that it was bubonic plague, a bacterial disease that periodically flared up in Asia and Europe. The plague had devastated the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century, killing an estimated 25 million people, and it continued to exterminate large numbers of Europeans until the last major outbreak at the start of the late 19th century. However, during its peak years, the plague's terrifying virulence spread faster, farther, and with deadlier effect than ever before or since. Its impact fundamentally altered the social, economic, and religious lives of those who survived, scarring the collective consciousness of the entire continent.

Medieval Europe was at the mercy of many infectious diseases, including dysentery, influenza, measles, and much feared leprosy. But it was the plague that struck the highest note of terror into people's hearts. Outbreaks seemed to strike from nowhere: It seized victims with alarming speed and its horrific ravages were incurable. None were safe as the plague cut down peasants and princes alike, its leveling of social distinctions resonating in the written accounts of the time. It is little wonder that its medieval chroniclers often assume an extravagant and even apocalyptic tone.

Many explanations of the plague were proposed, most wrapped up in religious or superstitious assumptions. Those closest to scientific reality were based on classical Greek medicine, attributing the sickness to miasmas: The invisible corruption in the air emanating



MAP: EOSGIS

from decomposing matter and supposedly absorbed by the body either by breathing or through skin contact. Some accounts suggested astrological causes, blaming the plague on the conjunction of certain planets, eclipses, or the sighting of a comet. Others cited natural phenomena: volcanic eruptions and seismic tremors releasing deadly gases. But even these explanations were widely believed to have an underlying cause: divine wrath at the sinfulness of humankind.

Of Rats and Men

It was only in the 19th century that the plague's supernatural origins were definitively discarded. An outbreak in the Far East prompted fears of a worldwide pandemic. Researchers rushed to identify the pathogen causing the disease, and in 1894 two bacteriologists—Japan's Kitasato Shibasaburo and France's Alexandre Yersin—simultaneously discovered the plague's bacillus, or rod-shaped bacteria. Later named *Yersinia pestis,* the bacteria was carried by fleas living as parasites on rats and other small rodents. The

The Deadly Path of the Plague Across Europe

Spreading rapidly inland from ports, the pestilence from Asia soon reached nearly all corners of Europe. Poor hygiene, diet, and medical knowledge helped it establish a deadly grip on the continent.



ALLEGORY OF THE PLAGUE, DETAIL FROM *LE MIROIR HISTORIAL,* BY VINCENT DE BEAUVAIS, 15TH-CENTURY TRANSLATION

1346
Soldiers in the Mongol army besieging Caffa, in the Crimea, are infected with plague. The disease enters the city and spreads rapidly via trade routes.

1347
The epidemic arrives in Constantinople and from there spreads to Greece, Sicily, and coastal cities in Italy and France.



AN ANGEL AND SAINT ROCH, PROTECTOR OF PLAGUE VICTIMS, IN A 16TH-CENTURY SCULPTURE

1348
The plague rampages through the Balkans, Italy, and France, across northern Spain and Portugal, and to southern England.

1348–49
A truce is called in the Hundred Years War, as the plague is rife in the contested regions and ravaging the armies of both sides.

1349
The plague arrives in central Europe, parts of Poland and Scandinavia, central England, and the southern area of Spain and Portugal.

1350
The Netherlands, most of Germany, Denmark, the Polish coast, the south of Sweden, and Scotland all succumb to the Black Death.

1351–53
Spreading east through Germany and Poland, the deadly pestilence reaches Moscow and its surrounding areas.

RATS DEVOUR THE CORPSE OF A PLAGUE VICTIM IN *LE MIROIR HISTORIAL*

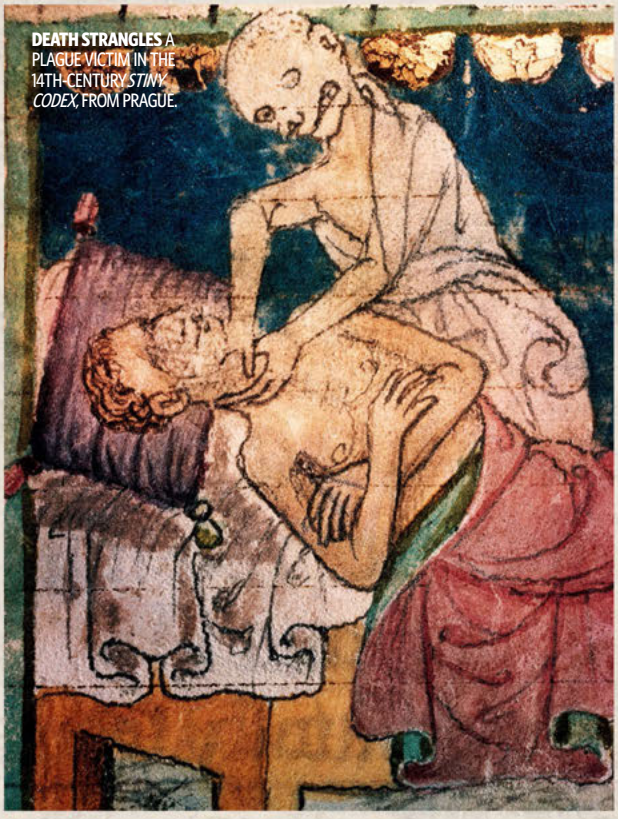


FROM TOP: BRIDGEMAN/ACI; ERICH LESSING/ALBUM; BRIDGEMAN/ACI

Was the Black Death Bubonic Plague?

Not all historians and epidemiologists agree that the pestilence that devastated Europe was bubonic plague. Instead, some of today's most feared diseases have been suggested, including a virulent pulmonary anthrax and the Ebola virus.

CRITICS OF the mainstream bubonic plague theory point out that it needs high temperatures and damp conditions to develop. These are not the conditions typically associated with the northern regions of Europe, where some of the most deeply affected areas were located. Nor is it clear that countries like England had sufficiently high infestations of rats and fleas to spread the disease. Doubts have also been cast on whether the bubonic plague could spread with such high speed, levels of infection, and rates of mortality. Some argue that the appearance of rashes, boils, and abscesses across the victim's body are not the usual symptoms of bubonic plague, of which a single swelling is more typical. The mystery continues to perplex scientists and historians alike, but most agree that it was bubonic plague.



DEATH STRANGLES A PLAGUE VICTIM IN THE 14TH-CENTURY *STINY CODEX*, FROM PRAGUE.

W. FORMAN/SCALA, FLORENCE



bacilli multiply in the gut of the flea. When it bites, it regurgitates the bacilli into the body, infecting it. Normally this takes place in a closed cycle between fleas and rodents. But under the right conditions the bacteria spreads at such a rate as to kill off its rodent hosts, forcing the fleas to find alternatives—humans. As such, the plague is a zoonosis, an illness that passes from animals to humans. Infection spread easily because the rats were drawn to human activity, especially the food supplies kept in barns, mills, and homes.

The bacteria could be present in people's homes for between 16 and 23 days before the first symptoms of illness emerged. Death came three to five days later. It was perhaps another week before a community became fully aware of the danger, and by that time it was too late. The nodules of a patient's lymphatic system became infected, showing as swellings in the groin and armpit. These were accompanied by vomiting, headaches, and a very high fever that caused sufferers to shiver violently, double up with cramps, and become delirious.



The inflamed lymph gland was widely known as a bubo, giving rise to the term bubonic plague. But this was only the most common form of the Black Death—two other variants of plague were also at work. Septicemic plague infected the victim's blood, causing visibly black patches beneath the skin, perhaps what gave the Black Death its name. Pneumonic plague affected the respiratory system, making the sufferer cough—the perfect mechanism for airborne infection. In the medieval world both septicemic and pneumonic plague had a 100 percent mortality rate.

A Swiftly Paced Plague

In Europe the Black Death first appeared in the Mediterranean basin and spread to most of the corners of the continent in just a few years. But the initial outbreak is thought to have been in the Black Sea port of Caffa, now Feodosiya, on the Crimean Peninsula. In 1346 Caffa was an important commercial trading post run by Genoese merchants. That year it was besieged by the Mongol army, among whose ranks were a growing number of plague sufferers. As the disease spread, one story has it, the Mongols deliberately hurled infested corpses over the walls—siege warfare was rarely chivalrous. Even more likely is that the bacteria entered the city in fleas carried by the rats scampering between the siege lines. However it arrived, once the city realized it faced a plague epidemic, the Genoese merchants panicked and fled, carrying the bacillus with them to Italy.

Historians and scientists have puzzled about how the Black Death took such a firm hold over such a vast area in such a short time. Some have suggested that the main plague variant was pneumonic rather than bubonic because airborne transmission seems to support its rapid spread. However, pneumonic plague kills so quickly—in a few hours—that it actually spreads slowly because the host rarely lives long enough to infect many people. Most evidence points to the Black Death being the main bubonic strain of plague, spread far and wide by flea-ridden rats on boats and fleas on the bodies and clothes of travelers. In an age of

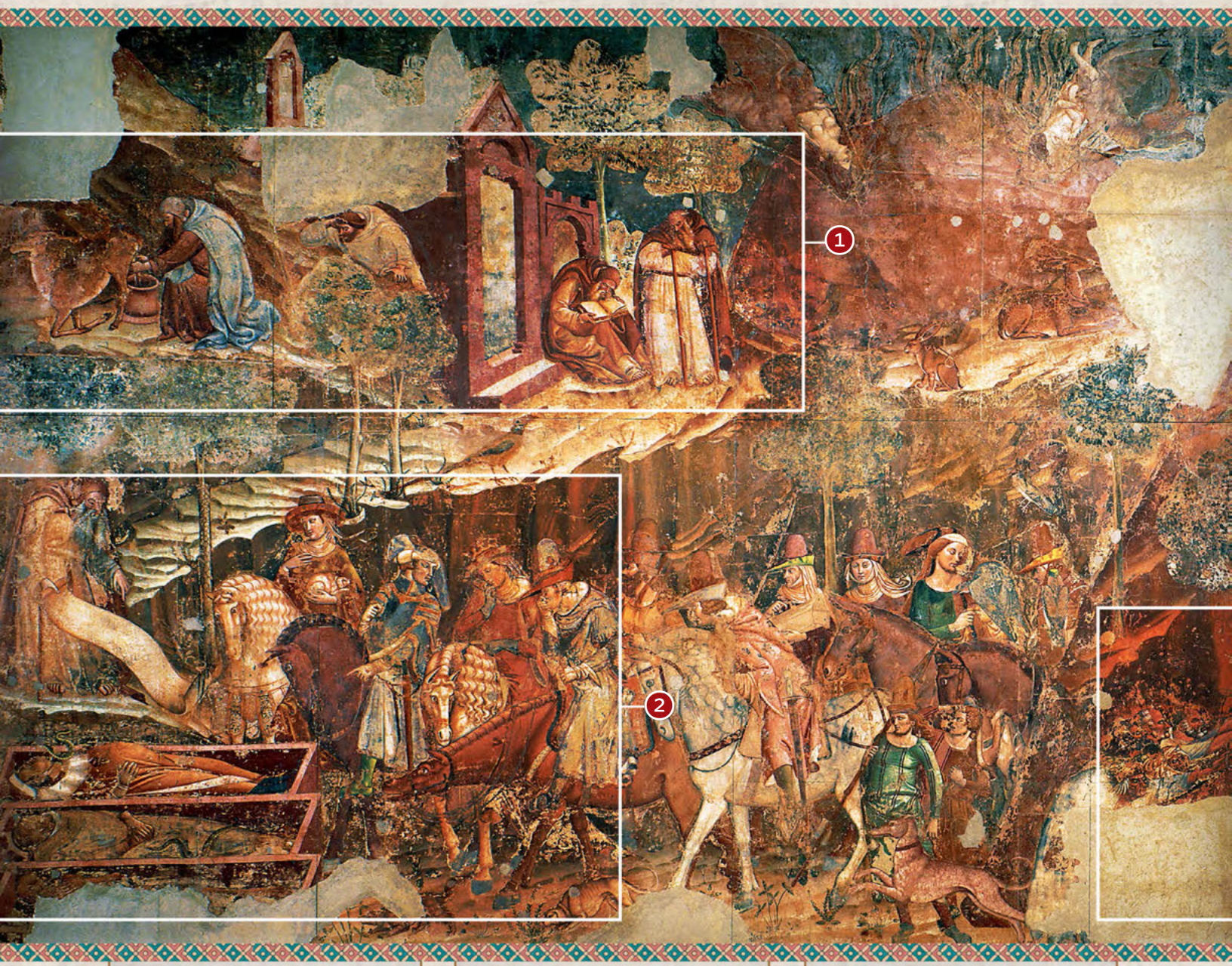
THE ROUTES OF COMMERCE AND DEATH

Close commercial links between the Baltic and the North Sea brought huge numbers of boats to ports such as Bruges (above). Many of these vessels carried the plague.

GÜNTER KIRSCH/AGE FOTOSTOCK

FROM EARTHLY PLEASURES TO

Before the epidemic arrived, a fresco depicting the Last Judgment was painted in Pisa. Its



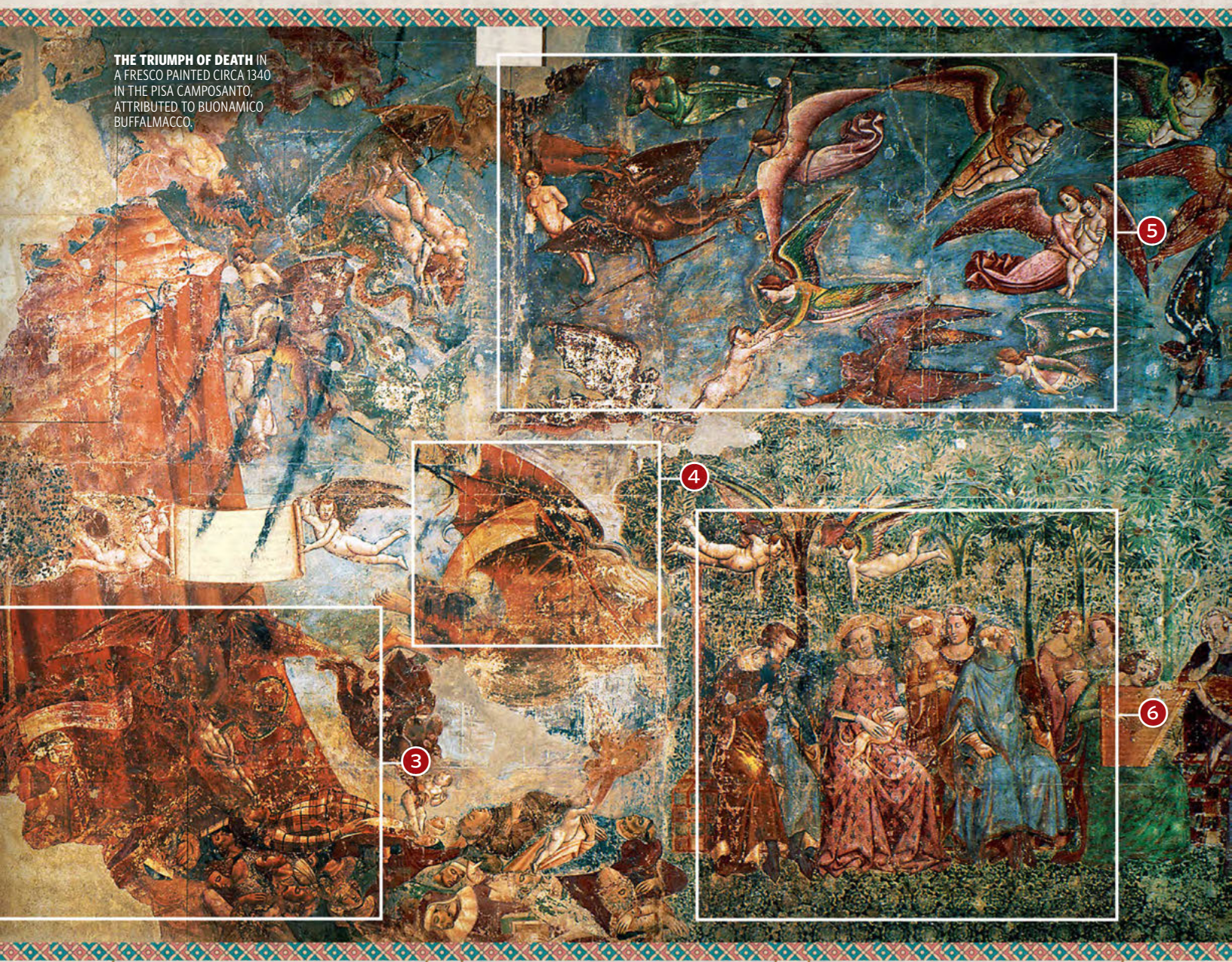
1 ***Pious hermits*** go about their daily work at a small remote sanctuary—reinforcing the idea of retreat from the world. One milks a goat, one reads, while another prays. Their indifference to death highlights their complete confidence in eternal salvation, a reward for devotion and piety.

2 ***A king and his retinue*** are reveling in their carefree day, enjoying a hunt, when they stumble on three corpses in various stages of decomposition. The king covers his nose against the stench, but he cannot escape this reminder of the transience of life and its fleeting pleasures.

3 ***The dead*** are heaped together in a pile. Death is the leveler through which all become equal. Pontiffs, kings, princes, and peasants all fall under the inevitable sweep of Death's scythe. A swarm of demons swoops down to take away the souls of those who sinned in life.

ETERNAL DAMNATION

vivid images resonated even more when the Black Death devastated the Italian city.



THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH IN A FRESCO PAINTED CIRCA 1340 IN THE PISA CAMPOSANTO, ATTRIBUTED TO BUONAMICO BUFFALMACCO.

ERICH LESSING / ALBUM

4 ***The scythe-wielding*** figure of Death dominates the center of the fresco. It hovers over its macabre kingdom, the pile of bodies that have succumbed to it. Damage to the fresco means that this figure does not immediately catch the eye as much as it would have originally.

5 ***Angels and demons*** fight for the souls of the dead, shown as children flying from the mouths of the deceased. This formidable moment of terror is captured in the Requiem mass: "Lo, the book, exactly worded / Wherein all hath been recorded / Thence shall judgment be awarded."

6 ***Young boys and girls*** converse in a representation of courtly love. They sit beneath luxuriant trees in a garden covered with bright flowers. Death seems very distant—for now. But the implication is that it will all too soon bring an end to youth, beauty, and earthly delight.



The Plague from Above . . . or Below?

In 2006 Mike Baillie, professor of paleoecology at Queen's University, Belfast, published *New Light on the Black Death: The Cosmic Connection*. In it he proposed a radical new idea on the origins of the medieval pandemic.

BAILLIE DETECTED a marked downturn in tree ring growth during two of the plague epidemics in Europe—the sixth century's and the Black Death—that coincided with unusually high concentrations of ammonium in Greenland ice samples from the same periods. But no natural processes on Earth produce so much ammonia. Baillie suspects that atmospheric detonations or earthquake-triggering ground impacts of cometary meteorites is one possibility. Contemporary accounts cited numerous phenomena: fiery rain, shooting stars, comets, and aerial explosions, as well as a pungent smoke in the air. Was Earth struck by a meteorite, its disintegration releasing ammonia? Or did impact release poisonous gases from underground? And did such noxious fumes play a part in the death of millions? Scientists are still debating these questions.



THE PLAGUE, SENT BY GOD AS A DIVINE PUNISHMENT FOR MANKIND'S SINS

AKG/ALBUM

growing maritime trade, food and goods were carried ever longer distances from country to country, and the rats and their bacteria traveled with them—at an estimated 24 miles a day. The unceasing flow of sea, river, and road traffic between commercial centers spread the plague across huge distances in what is known as a "metastatic leap." Big commercial cities were infected first, and from there the plague radiated to nearby towns and villages, from where it would spread into the countryside. The plague was also carried down the well-trodden paths of medieval pilgrims; holy sites became additional epicenters of regional, national, and international propagation.

Even without such help the plague is estimated to have moved inland more than a mile a day in the right conditions. In very cold and dry areas it slowed to a stop, explaining why Iceland and Finland were among the few places to escape its ravages. A popular refrain in cities of the time ran: "Get out soon, quick and far, and the later you return, the better." It was advice heeded by many who could afford to flee to the



countryside. Yet this brought disastrous consequences. Evacuation did not necessarily save those fleeing, as some were already infected or traveling with plague carriers. However, it did help to spread the disease to new and ever more remote places as evacuees sought the safety of uninfected villages.

The Death Toll

Calculations of the fatalities caused by the Black Death make shocking reading. In absolute terms, the population of Europe was estimated to be around 75 million people before the plague: It plummeted to just 50 million in the six years between 1347 and 1353. The sharp decline was a result of both the disease itself and the widespread social breakdown it set in motion—not least that the deaths left fields and animals untended and family members uncared for. Even after the Black Death burned itself out, flare-ups continued to disrupt Europe's demographic recovery. Not until around the 16th century did Europe's population growth start to strengthen.

The effects of the catastrophe were apparent in every area of life. In the decades following the pandemic, wages soared because of the huge shortage of workers. Vast tracts of once productive farmland turned to pasture, and even whole villages lay abandoned—around a thousand in England alone. There was a major migration from the countryside to the cities, which recovered relatively quickly and were reinvigorated with commercial energy. The peasants who remained in the countryside were often able to take their pick of unused land, increasing the power of the landed peasantry and boosting the rural economy.

Indeed, historians have argued that the Black Death paved the way for a new wave of opportunity, creativity, and wealth from which would flourish the art, culture, and ideas of the Renaissance, and the beginnings of a recognizably modern Europe. ■

ANTONI VIRGILI
VIRGILI IS A SPECIALIST IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

THE PLAGUE IN EASTERN EUROPE

The city of Prague (above) was the capital of the kingdom of Bohemia, where, it is believed, the deadly infection arrived overland from the German region of Bavaria, its southern neighbor.

RAINER MIRAU/AGE FOTOSTOCK

CHANGING EUROPE

In March 1348 Guillem Bassa died on the island of Mallorca, the first documented victim of the plague in what is now Spain. By June 300 people a day were dying in the city of Valencia. The epidemic drastically changed people's behavior, transforming the economy and the society.



SAINT ROCH, PROTECTOR OF THE PLAGUE-STRICKEN, IN A 16TH-CENTURY PAINTING



ALFONSO XI IN A MINIATURE, FROM *THE GREAT SPANISH CHRONICLE*

I Death of a King

Royalty could not escape the pestilence. On October 30, 1348, the Black Death carried off Leonora of Portugal, the wife of the King of Aragon. On March 26, 1350, the plague raging through Andalusia killed King Alfonso XI of Castile while he was besieging the fortress of Gibraltar. He was the only European monarch to die of the disease.



A JEW THREATENED BY CHRISTIANS IN THE 13TH-CENTURY. *CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARÍA*

II Blame the Jews

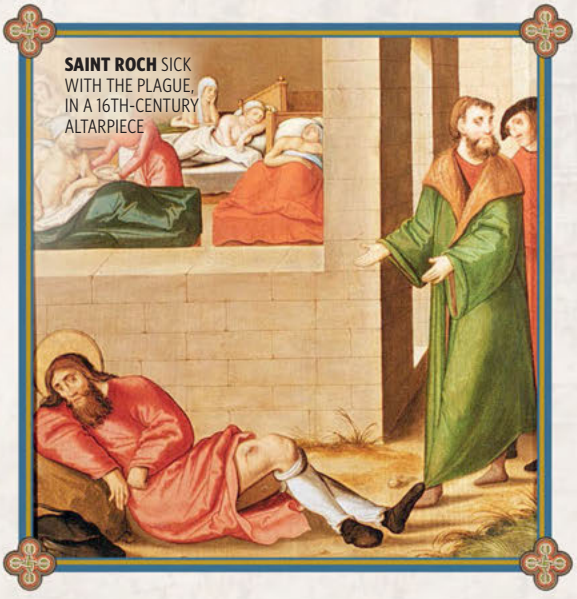
On May 14, 1348, a religious procession in Barcelona ended with an attack on the Jewish ghetto in which many were killed. The massacre was incited by priests who accused Jews of having poisoned water and food sources thought to be causing the deaths. The plague stirred often violent anti-Semitism across Europe.



MEDIEVAL BROTHEL. MINIATURE CIRCA 1450

III Seize the Day

The plague killed families and friendships, leaving many without financial security. This caused an increase in extramarital affairs and prostitution. In 1351 the chronicles of the Spanish city of Valladolid scandalously reported, "Concubines of clergymen . . . brazenly walking around . . . wearing rich cloth . . . adorned with silver and gold."



SAINT ROCH SICK WITH THE PLAGUE, IN A 16TH-CENTURY ALTARPIECE

IV Plague and Piety

The fear of eternal damnation in the flames of hell prompted many to change their wills in favor of churches. These attempts to placate God's wrath greatly enriched church coffers. The epidemic also enhanced the cults of Saint Roch and Saint Sebastian, both seen as powerful protectors of the plague-stricken.

Fugere cito, longe, et tarde revert

Advice to avoid the plague: "Get out soon, quick and far, and the later you return, the better."



AN ANGEL POINTS AT A SINNER WHO HAS BEEN THE VICTIM (NOT PICTURED) OF THE PLAGUE IN A 15TH-CENTURY PAINTING.

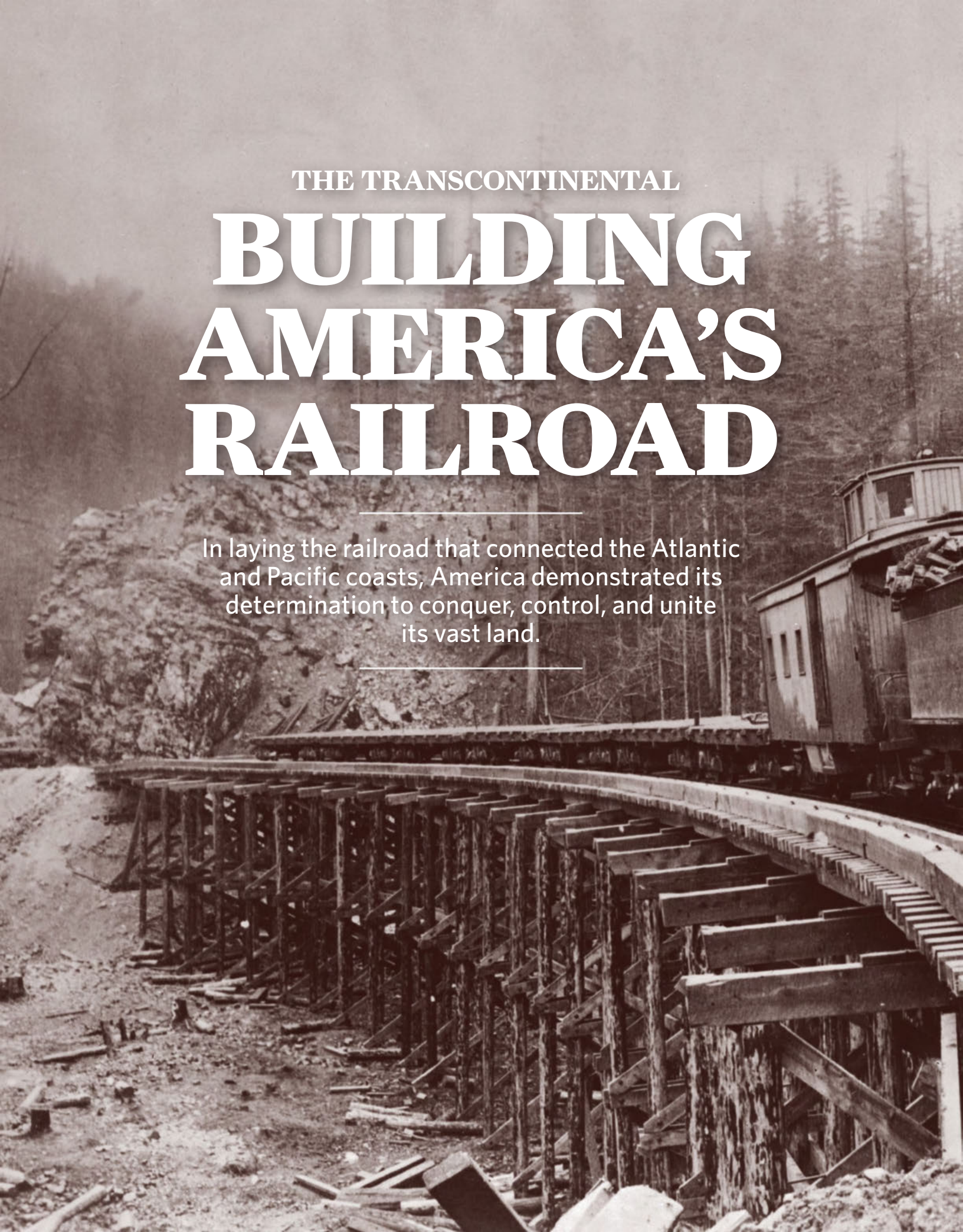


PEASANTS IN THE BIBLE OF ST. LOUIS, FROM THE 13TH CENTURY

V Empty Countryside

The plague took a heavy toll on Europe's peasantry. Land that was once worked for crops was now left for grazing. The booming wool trade of England and other countries was a direct consequence of the plague's devastation. A scarcity of labor allowed survivors to demand higher pay and threatened Europe's feudal system.

LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: AKG/ALBUM; ORONOZ/ALBUM; AKG/ALBUM; SCALA, FLORENCE; PRISMA/ALBUM; AKG/ALBUM; ORONOZ/ALBUM



THE TRANSCONTINENTAL

BUILDING AMERICA'S RAILROAD

In laying the railroad that connected the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, America demonstrated its determination to conquer, control, and unite its vast land.



The track, tunnels, bridges, and trains that allowed passengers and freight to travel from coast to coast at up to 50 miles an hour were a testament to the pioneering spirit of the age.

BETTMANN/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

Tracks Across the Continent

1862
Congress passes the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, which gives railroad builders generous land grants and large long-term loans to fund construction.

DECEMBER 2, 1863
Dignitaries take part in a ground-breaking ceremony in Omaha, Nebraska, that marks the start of work on the Union Pacific Railroad.

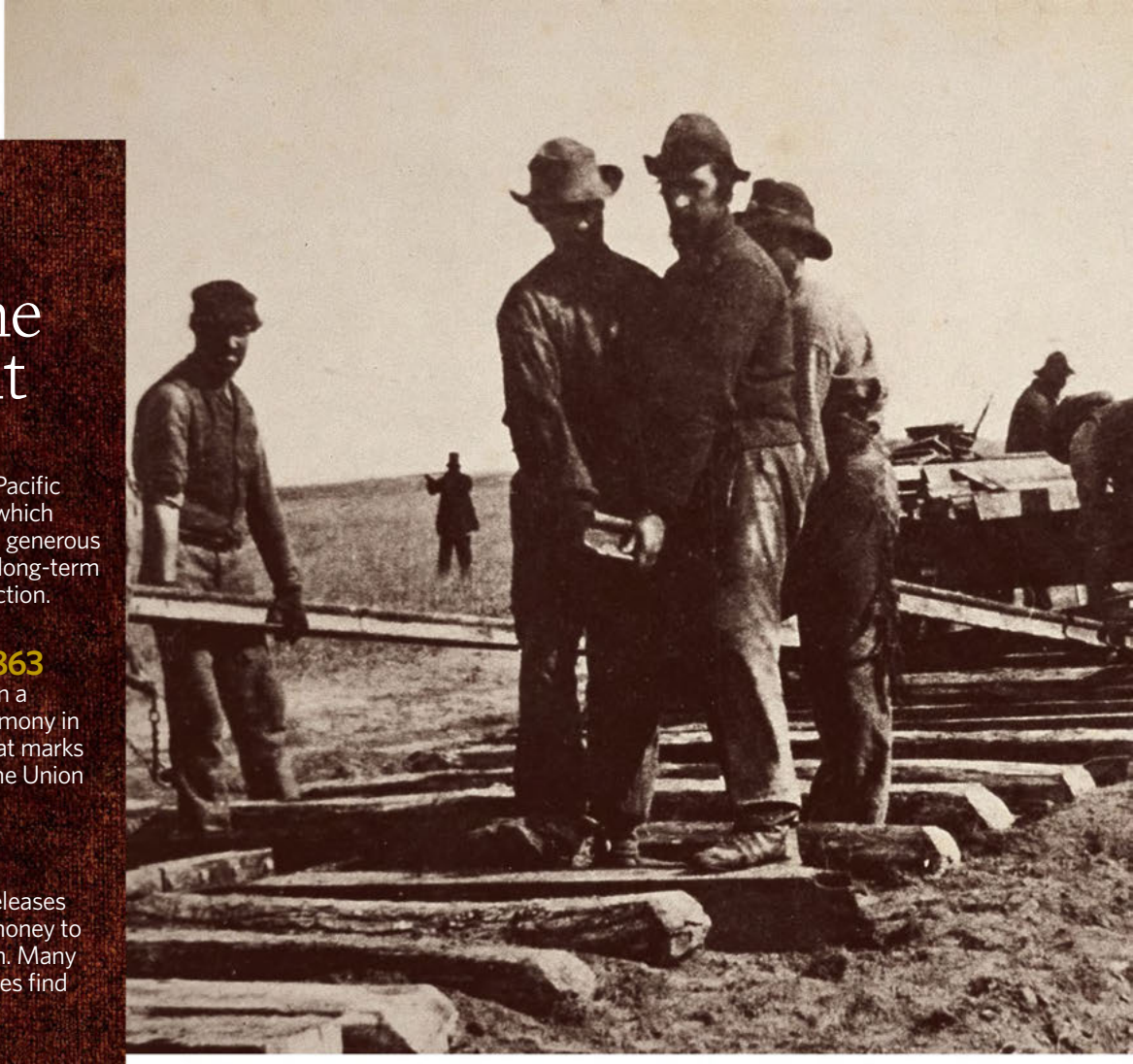
SUMMER 1865
The Civil War's end releases men, materials, and money to speed up construction. Many soldiers from both sides find work on the railroad.

SUMMER 1867
As the Union Pacific line reaches Wyoming, 2,000 Chinese workers on the Central Pacific strike but are forced back to work by lack of food.

SPRING 1868
Track had been laid through the 1,650-foot Summit Tunnel, blasted through the Sierra Nevada by Central Pacific workers.

APRIL 28, 1869
A Central Pacific crew set a record by laying ten miles of track in just twelve hours, although much of the work was slapdash.

MAY 10, 1869
The Golden Spike is hammered in at Promontory Summit, Utah, signaling the completion of the transcontinental railroad.



GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

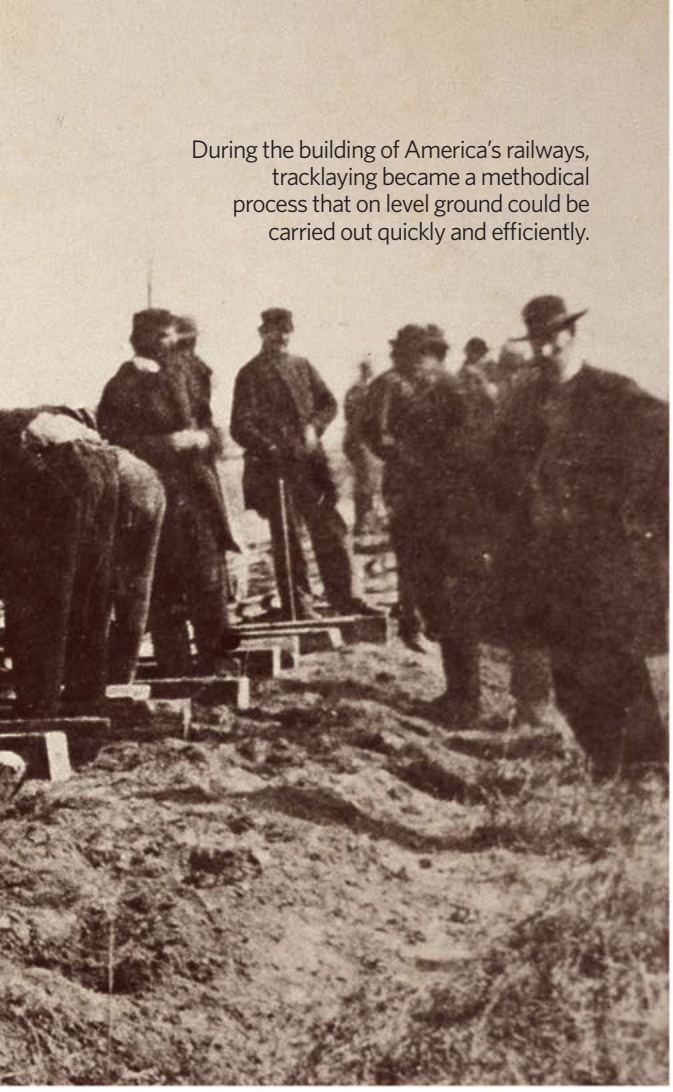
In November 1863 President Lincoln lamented the huge loss of American life at Gettysburg. The Civil War divided the United States, but the railroad would help reunite it.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



The American Civil War was entering its third bitter winter. No one knew for sure if a nation founded by rebels "four score and seven years ago," in Abraham Lincoln's words, would emerge intact from what some saw as a second American Revolution. Yet as fighting between Unionists and Confederates continued, a massive project got under way that would come to symbolize national unity by linking the original thirteen states along the Atlantic coast to that glittering newcomer on the Pacific called California. On December 2, 1863, in Omaha, Nebraska—as far west as passengers could travel by train at the time—dignitaries broke ground for the Union Pacific Railroad. This would span the continent by laying tracks across the Plains to a distant junction with the Central Pacific Railroad, advancing eastward from Sacramento, California. A few weeks earlier, Lincoln had delivered his Gettysburg Address, honoring the Union dead. Bolstered by hard-earned victories, the Unionists were determined not just to reclaim the South but to secure the West and bind it to the East

During the building of America's railways, tracklaying became a methodical process that on level ground could be carried out quickly and efficiently.



BRIDGEMAN/ACI



MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

THE AGE OF STEAM

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION brought the power of steam to transportation, changing almost every aspect of society, including warfare. Trains were used extensively in the Civil War, allowing rapid deployment of large armies and weapons to distant battlefronts. Railroad junctions like Chattanooga became crucial strategic hubs.

UNION RAILROAD MORTAR, "THE DICTATOR," DURING THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA, 1864

by rail. "When this shall have been done," wrote Secretary of State William Seward to those breaking ground in Omaha, "disunion will be rendered forever after impossible."

The great transcontinental railroad inaugurated during the Civil War was made possible by an earlier conflict, the Mexican-American War. This had concluded in 1848 with a treaty that ceded to the United States the vast area through which the Union Pacific and Central Pacific would eventually run, including the future states of California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Wyoming. During the 1850s, expeditions launched by the U.S. Army surveyed the future Union Pacific—Central Pacific route and several other possible pathways to the Pacific. Up along the Canadian border blizzards and avalanches in the Rocky Mountains and Cascade Range made the prospects of laying tracks so far north extremely problematic. In the South, politicians like senator and former secretary of war Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, who would later become president of the Confederacy, favored a route through Texas. As he and others pointed out, the southern route offered perfect conditions for railroad builders, including mild winters and level terrain for much of the way. However, critics noted that it lacked the crucial ingredients of water and timber, and passed through few settlements of any size or importance. What good would come, asked Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, from building a railroad across country "so utterly desolate, deserted, and God-forsaken that Kit Carson says a wolf could not make his living on it?"

Benton himself favored a route running almost due west from St. Louis, Missouri, to San Francisco, but surveyors of that path came up against a daunting barrier in the Front Range of the Rockies in Colorado Territory. In any case, Northern politicians were wary of a route originating in Missouri—a slaveholding Border State whose loyalty to the Union was in doubt as the Civil War loomed—and dead set against funding any railroad that would connect the potentially hostile Deep South to the mineral wealth

THE TRAIN REVOLUTION

On September 15, 1830, travel changed forever with the introduction of the world's first passenger train service. Stephenson's Rocket (below) carried passengers from Liverpool to Manchester.

AKG/ALBUM





of the Far West. When Southerners left Congress to join the Confederacy in 1860–61, the remaining representatives were free to select their preferred route. This ran from Omaha to Sacramento, passing entirely through states or territories that were firmly in the Union camp. It also had the advantage of following paths that were well marked by the wagons that over the past few decades had carried thousands of traders, prospectors, and settlers westward. It included portions of the Oregon Trail that ascended gently along the Platte River in Nebraska to a relatively easy pass through the Rockies in Wyoming and the California Trail that descended to the Great Basin and crossed Nevada along the Humboldt River.

Those who traveled along that historic route from Nebraska to California, including riders for the short-lived Pony Express, established in 1860, and crews who completed the transcontinental telegraph a year later, faced few steep inclines until they confronted the towering peaks of the Sierra Nevada. Pioneers entering California in wagons had struggled over this imposing mountain range at great effort, sometimes perishing in the attempt. Fifty miles wide at its narrowest point and soaring up to 14,000 feet above sea level, the Sierra Nevada stood as one of the stiffest challenges North American railroad builders had faced anywhere. Congress acknowledged the cost of overcoming this obstacle when it passed the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, which offered the builders not only generous land grants along the route but also long-term loans that increased with the difficulty of the terrain, peaking at $48,000 for every mile of track laid through mountains.

TRACKS AND TELEGRAPH POLES

The government stipulated that the railroad must build a telegraph line alongside the track. This was usually a standard two-wire line on tall wooden poles—often knocked over by buffalo using them as scratching posts.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

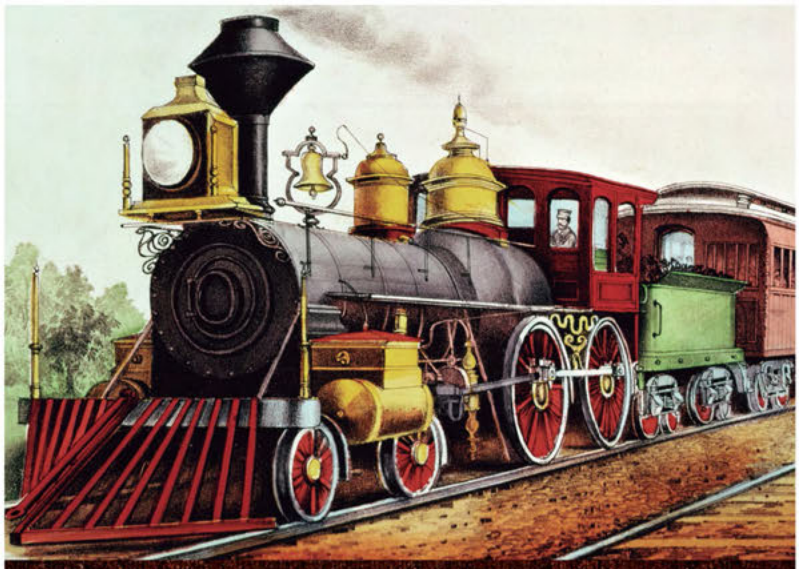


Refining the Route

Hefty construction loans might have been hard for the wartime Union Treasury to bear had work begun in earnest during the conflict. But before crews began grading railbeds and hammering down tracks, chief engineers and master surveyors such as Theodore Judah of the Central Pacific and Peter Dey of the Union Pacific had to chart the best possible paths for steam



MAP: EOSGIS



BRIDGEMAN/ACI

THE IRON HORSE

BY THE 1860s steam locomotive design was fairly advanced, and trains typically weighed 25 to 35 tons and traveled at speeds of up to 50 miles an hour. In 1869 the Union Pacific had 147 locomotives, 25 first-class and 26 second-class coaches, as well as 1,150 boxcars, 1,500 flatcars, and another 100 assorted freight cars.

THE THROUGH EXPRESS, 19TH-CENTURY COLOR LITHOGRAPH

locomotives pulling heavy loads. Those trains could not handle tight turns or tracks that ascended more than about 120 feet over the course of a mile. With that in mind, the surveyors often departed from the Oregon and California Trails to follow straighter paths or seek gentler inclines.

Judah plotted an ingenious but laborious course over the Sierra Nevada that involved Central Pacific construction crews carving railbeds out of mountainsides and digging no less than 13 tunnels. He clashed frequently with the Central Pacific investors known as the "Big Four"—Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, Collis Huntington, and Leland Stanford—who obtained larger government loans by prevailing on President Lincoln to certify that the Sierra Nevada began in the foothills just east of Sacramento. "Abraham's faith moved mountains," one politician quipped. Judah feared that the Big Four would milk the Central Pacific dry and hoped to buy them out, but he died of yellow fever in late 1863 while crossing the Isthmus of Panama to raise funds in the East. Dey had similar conflicts with the Union Pacific's management and resigned as the railroad's chief engineer two years later.

He was replaced by Grenville Dodge, a former Union brigadier general who exemplified the drive and determination that enabled the North to turn quickly from defeating the South to conquering the West. Crushing the Confederacy in 1865 enabled the Union to shift its focus westward and overcome not only formidable geographical barriers between the Midwest and the Pacific coast but also stiff resistance from Indians who occupied that country. The Indians opposed intrusions by settlers, prospectors, and railroad builders, who they rightly saw as a threat to their way of life. To feed work crews, the bison on which

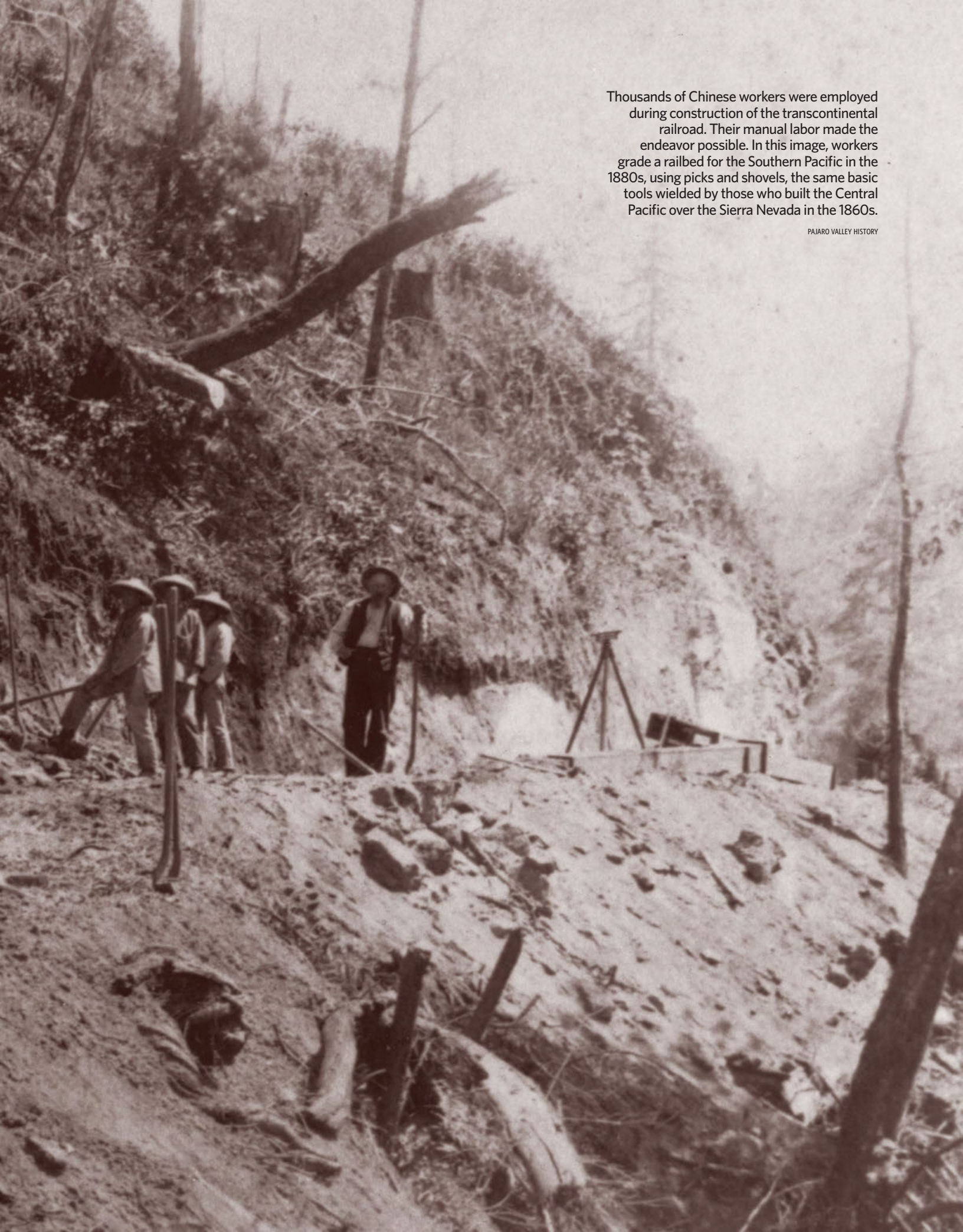


The railroad workers were fed by slaughtering Plains buffalo on an industrial scale.

COLONEL "BUFFALO BILL" CODY, IN A 19TH-CENTURY PHOTOGRAPH

HULTON/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS





Thousands of Chinese workers were employed during construction of the transcontinental railroad. Their manual labor made the endeavor possible. In this image, workers grade a railbed for the Southern Pacific in the 1880s, using picks and shovels, the same basic tools wielded by those who built the Central Pacific over the Sierra Nevada in the 1860s.

PAJARO VALLEY HISTORY

ONCE I BUILT A RAILROAD

Laying track followed a standardized method adapted to any particular challenges faced. The American-made wrought iron rails were usually 28 feet long and weighed 56 pounds per yard. They were bolted together with fishplates, which allowed for expansion and contraction as temperatures changed. Track was laid on wooden crossties—up to 2,640 per mile. On the Union Pacific the available timber was poor quality, so it had to be treated and better hardwood brought in for the end and center ties of each rail length.

Once the route was surveyed and marked out, "graders" moved in with picks, shovels, and horse-drawn scrapers to prepare the ground, creating a gradient, or slope, that would ensure that trains could climb and descend at safe, steady rates. Where necessary, newly invented nitroglycerin explosives were used to blast through rocks, and timber bridges were built over streams, rivers, and canyons.

Tracklaying was a spectacular sight, excitedly reported by correspondents at the time. A car loaded with rails was moved to the very end of the new track, where a dozen men lifted each of the rails and laid them parallel on the embedded ties. "Gaugers" adjusted the width between them, and spikes were dropped along their lengths, tapped gently into the ties before being driven home by three powerful strokes of a sledgehammer. Finally, "bolters" attached the fishplates. Then the whole process repeated, moving forward at walking pace.



THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY BEING BUILT CIRCA 1869. THIS PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE PROCESS OF GRADING THE TRACK BED UP ONE OF THE MANY SLOPES ENGINEERS HAD TO OVERCOME.





FINE ART/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

LAND GRANTS AND SCANDALS IN THE SENATE

AFTER 1863 OTHER RAILROADS began that would eventually cross the West, including the Santa Fe, Northern Pacific, and Southern Pacific. Generous federal loans and land grants boosted construction, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific receiving 12,800 acres for every mile of track they laid. Hungry for quick profits, railroad directors set up construction firms that charged excessive rates to lay track. The directors made millions while keeping their indebted railroads going by selling bonds to unsuspecting investors and lining the pockets of government officials who favored their companies. In 1872 a list of politicians given shares in a construction firm was leaked, and the public grew wary of the financial ploys of railroad bosses.

tribes relied were slaughtered in droves by professional hunters like William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, who later won fame for his Wild West shows. As a result, when Dodge resigned from the army and resumed his former occupation as a surveyor and engineer, he went from battling Confederates to fighting Plains Indians. Warriors attacked vulnerable advance parties of railroad graders and bridge builders, so when Dodge regimented his workers for railroad construction, he also made sure they were ready to defend themselves against Indian raids. He had formed "the best organized, best equipped, and best disciplined work force I have ever seen," Dodge later remarked. "I used it several times as a fighting force, and it took no longer to put it into fighting line than it did to form it for daily work." Soon the Union Pacific, which had thus far made little progress, was advancing across Nebraska with military efficiency. Every day, a construction train chugged forward another few miles to where new track was being laid, delivering equipment and laborers, including some Confederate and Union veterans. One reporter likened the pounding of their hammers on spikes to a "grand Anvil Chorus . . . playing across the plains." In their spare time, workers looked for entertainment in the towns that sprouted up along the tracks to serve them. Known as "hell on wheels," most of those places withered after crews moved on. But some endured, either as little "jerkwater" towns—where by jerking the chain on the spigot arm of a trackside storage tank, a steam locomotive could fill its water tender—or as substantial division points like Cheyenne, Wyoming, where rail yards and machine shops were located.

Indispensable Immigrants

By 1867, as the Union Pacific tracks entered Wyoming, Central Pacific crews were still working their way over the Sierra Nevada. They were equal to that challenge, however, thanks in large part to a proposal by Central Pacific executive Charles Crocker, who served as superintendent of construction. Two years earlier, unable

EPHEMERAL SETTLERS

As the railroad advanced, temporary towns sprang up to sell the workers everything from crockery to liquor. When the workers moved on, these places evaporated or became water stops for trains, called jerkwater towns.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



FROM TOP: AKG/ALBUM; BETTMANN/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS



to hire enough white laborers for the demanding project, Crocker had suggested hiring Chinese immigrants. "I will not boss Chinese!" replied foreman James Strobridge, who thought Chinese men were too frail to grade beds, excavate tunnels, and lay tracks. Crocker pointed out that men of similar stature had built China's Great Wall. Strobridge agreed to try out a crew of 50—he was soon asking for more.

By 1867 more than 10,000 Chinese immigrants were toiling diligently on the railroad in the Sierra Nevada. Some had arrived in California during the gold rush that began there in the late 1840s. Others were recruited in China by labor contractors and transported across the Pacific specifically to build the railroad. At first they earned less than white workers, who themselves made only about $35 a month. Eventually, the Chinese earned the same amount, but for working longer shifts—up to twelve hours a day, six days a week. Despite the grueling regimen they were generally healthier than other workers, in no small part thanks to their habit of drinking hot tea and thus avoiding the risks posed by water that had not been boiled. Yet scores were killed or maimed in explosions while laying charges of black powder and dynamite, or fell victim to avalanches and various other accidents. But all those who were fit for labor remained hard at work.

Early on there was "no danger of strikes among them," wrote E. B. Crocker, Charles Crocker's brother and the railroad's legal counsel. But as their numbers and efficiency increased, they realized that their labor was worth more to their employers than they were paid. In June 1867 they went on strike, demanding higher pay, a ten-hour workday, and the right to seek employment elsewhere. Charles Crocker refused to negotiate, forcing them back to work by cutting off their food supplies. "I don't think we will ever have any more such difficulties," wrote his brother, who paid belated tribute to those workers in a speech delivered after their epic task was completed: "I wish to call to your minds that the early completion of this railroad we have built has been in large measure due to that poor, despised class of laborers called the Chinese, to the fidelity and industry they have shown."

THE RAILWAY'S SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE

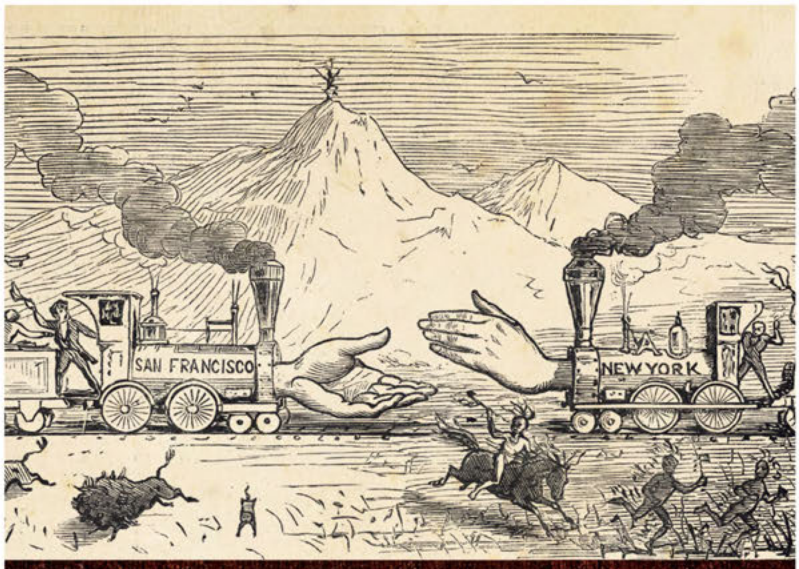
Charles Crocker epitomized the American dream. He quit school to support his family, working as a laborer before opening a shop in Sacramento. He became a powerful businessman, banker, and politician worth around $40 million.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI





ALAMY/ACI



GRANGER COLLECTION/AGE FOTOSTOCK

THE FINISH LINE

THOMAS HILL'S PAINTING (left) depicts the ceremonial driving of the "Last Spike" at Promontory Summit in Utah. A newspaper cartoon illustrated the railroad's completion with locomotives representing the largest cities on the two coasts triumphantly joining hands while Native Americans and buffalo fled the scene.

CARTOON FROM FROM *FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER*, MAY 29, 1869

Race to the Finish

By the spring of 1868 Central Pacific crews in the high Sierra had laid track through the 1,650-foot-long Summit Tunnel—whose 7,042-foot elevation represented a gain of more than 7,000 feet from low-lying Sacramento—and proceeded down along Donner Lake and the Truckee River to Reno, Nevada. They were now on level ground and surpassing the pace of Union Pacific crews, who had to excavate several tunnels through the Wasatch Range along the Wyoming-Utah border, where Mormons swelled the workforce. No junction for the two lines had yet been agreed upon, and bosses on both sides vied for federal subsidies by pressing crews ahead so fast that much of their work was slapdash. Central Pacific workers set a record on April 28, 1869, by laying more than ten miles of track in 12 hours.

By then, Promontory Summit, in northern Utah, had been designated as the junction for the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads to meet. The American rail network would then reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific, for Sacramento would soon be connected by train to San Francisco Bay, and various routes would connect Omaha with East Coast cities like Washington, D.C., and New York. The completion of the transcontinental railroad, on May 10, 1869, signaled that a nation torn asunder eight years earlier was now firmly stitched together in iron. This sentiment was expressed in an inscription on the Golden Spike—also known as the Last Spike—used in the grand ceremony staged to signify the final joining of the tracks: "May God continue the unity of our Country as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world."

STEPHEN G. HYSLOP
HYSLOP HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY FOR TIME-LIFE AND NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BOOKS. THIS ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM HIS LATEST BOOK, *THE OLD WEST.*

Learn more

BOOKS

The Old West
Stephen G. Hyslop, National Geographic, 2015.

Nothing Like it in the World
Stephen E. Ambrose, Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Rival Rails: The Race to Build America's Greatest Transcontinental Railroad
Walter R. Borneman, Random House, 2010.

EAST MEETS WEST WITH



SAN FRANCISCO

SAN FRANCISCO BOOMED WITH THE DISCOVERY of gold in California in 1848. A year later it had around 25,000 inhabitants, more than doubling, to 56,000, by 1860, and surging to 150,000 by 1870, making it the tenth largest city in the United States. Despite being hundreds of miles from the frontier and over 2,500 miles from the developed cities of the East Coast, San Francisco displayed all the signs of a flourishing urban center: Hotels, restaurants, parks, churches, synagogues, schools, libraries, academies, and its own newspaper—the *Chronicle,* started in 1865. In 1858 the first overland stagecoach service with the East began, and in 1861 a telegraph service connected it with New York. But the arrival of the transcontinental railroad revolutionized communication, allowing passengers and freight to travel quickly from coast to coast.

A 2,500-MILE RAILROAD



NEW YORK

AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE LINE was New York. From a small Dutch colony to the commercial epicenter of the continent, New York owed much of its rapid expansion to the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, which gave Great Lakes cities access to the Atlantic sea trade. By the early1870s New York boasted a population of almost one million and already had many of the famous institutions we associate with it today: Lehman Brothers, Barnum's American Museum, the *New York Herald*, the Stock Exchange, and Bloomingdale's, as well as the New York Police Department and Metropolitan Fire Department. Iconic buildings included City Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Grace Church, and the Halls of Justice. The Brooklyn Bridge was under construction, and Central Park had become a popular attraction.

BONHAMS, LONDON/BRIDGEMAN/ACI; HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; UIG/ALBUM

Jericho: The First Fortified City in History

The city walls of Jericho were no match for Joshua in his biblical conquest of Canaan. But while fortifications and even an impressive tower have been unearthed, the ancient walls he managed to bring down still elude archaeologists.

The story of Joshua blasting down the walls of Jericho is one of the most captivating passages in the Old Testament. It supposedly took place around 1400 B.C. during the invasion of Canaan, the land Yahweh promised to the people of Israel, and tells of a seven-day siege during which Yahweh ordered the Israelites to march around the city walls. On the seventh day they circled the city seven times: "So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."



Jericho originally stood on Tell es-Sultan, an oval mound covering around ten acres of the Jordan Valley. It was an important city in ancient Israel and was visited by early Christians, including one known as the Bordeaux Pilgrim. He wrote in A.D. 333, "Here stood the city of Jericho, round whose walls the children of Israel circled with the Ark of the Covenant, and the walls fell down. Nothing is to be seen of it except the place where the Ark of the Covenant stood, and the twelve stones which the children of Israel brought out of Jordan." Ancient Jericho was abandoned shortly afterward, and a new city was built nearby.

The Groundwork

The first modern archaeologists to search for Jericho's walls found barely a trace of the original settlement. At the end of the 19th century Charles Warren from the British Palestine Exploration Fund made initial investigations, but finding little more than pottery jugs and stone mortars he concluded that the site was not worth excavating. Between 1907 and 1911 Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger were funded by Orient-Gesellschaft to lead further digs. This Austro-German expedition used more modern archaeological methods, based on stratigraphy that

IN 1958 JORDANIAN workers excavated a defensive tower within Jericho's city walls. This impressive fortification dates from about 7000 B.C.



BIRD-SHAPED DRINKING VESSEL FOUND IN JERICHO. MIDDLE BRONZE AGE, 1700 B.C.
BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

1907–1911
Ernst Sellin and **Carl Watzinger** dig in Jericho and discover walls that they claim are those destroyed by Joshua.

1930–1936
British archaeologist **John Garstang** excavates the city's oldest levels, dating them back to the Mesolithic period.

1952–58
Kathleen Kenyon conducts seven digs in Jericho and proves that its walls date back to the eighth century B.C.

1997
Lorenzo Nigro and **Nicolò Marchetti** carry out limited digs at the site, which remains archaeologically valuable.

BETTMANN/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

allowed more accurate dating of objects. They found walls that they dated to the 14th and 13th centuries B.C., and suggested that these were the defenses destroyed by Joshua.

However, from 1930 to 1936 the British archaeologist John Garstang concluded that the city's most ancient levels dated back to the Mesolithic period—around 10,000 B.C. This was much earlier than anyone had imagined, and Garstang dated the destruction of Jericho to a period before the Late Bronze Age. This was before Joshua's time, and his walls were now nowhere to be found.

Modern Methods

The enigma of Jericho began to be solved in the early 1950s. Kathleen Kenyon was a British archaeologist

A PIONEER OF MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY

KATHLEEN KENYON was one of the most prominent archaeologists of her time. She already had an excellent international reputation when she took charge of the Jericho digs in 1952. Kenyon had excavated Great Zimbabwe in Africa and worked with Sir Mortimer Wheeler, perfecting his stratigraphic methods and using them in her excavations.



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KATHLEEN KENYON AT THE JERICHO RUINS, 1958

A Neolithic City in the Near East

NEOLITHIC Jericho was spread over ten acres and surrounded by a defensive wall. The homes were rectangular and grouped together. Its population numbered around 2,000, and they planted crops and probably raised livestock. The picture below shows life in Jericho during that period.



BRIDGEMAN/ACI

1 *Tower and wall*
The wall was six feet thick and the large circular tower was 26 feet tall.

2 *Altar*
Excavations of one wall revealed an altar with a life-size plaster figure on it.

3 *Houses*
Houses were rectangular with a central courtyard, red walls, and limestone floors.

4 *Cereals*
The hand mills and mortars found indicate the domestication of wheat.

5 *Looms*
The presence of looms for weaving wool suggests they kept flocks of animals.

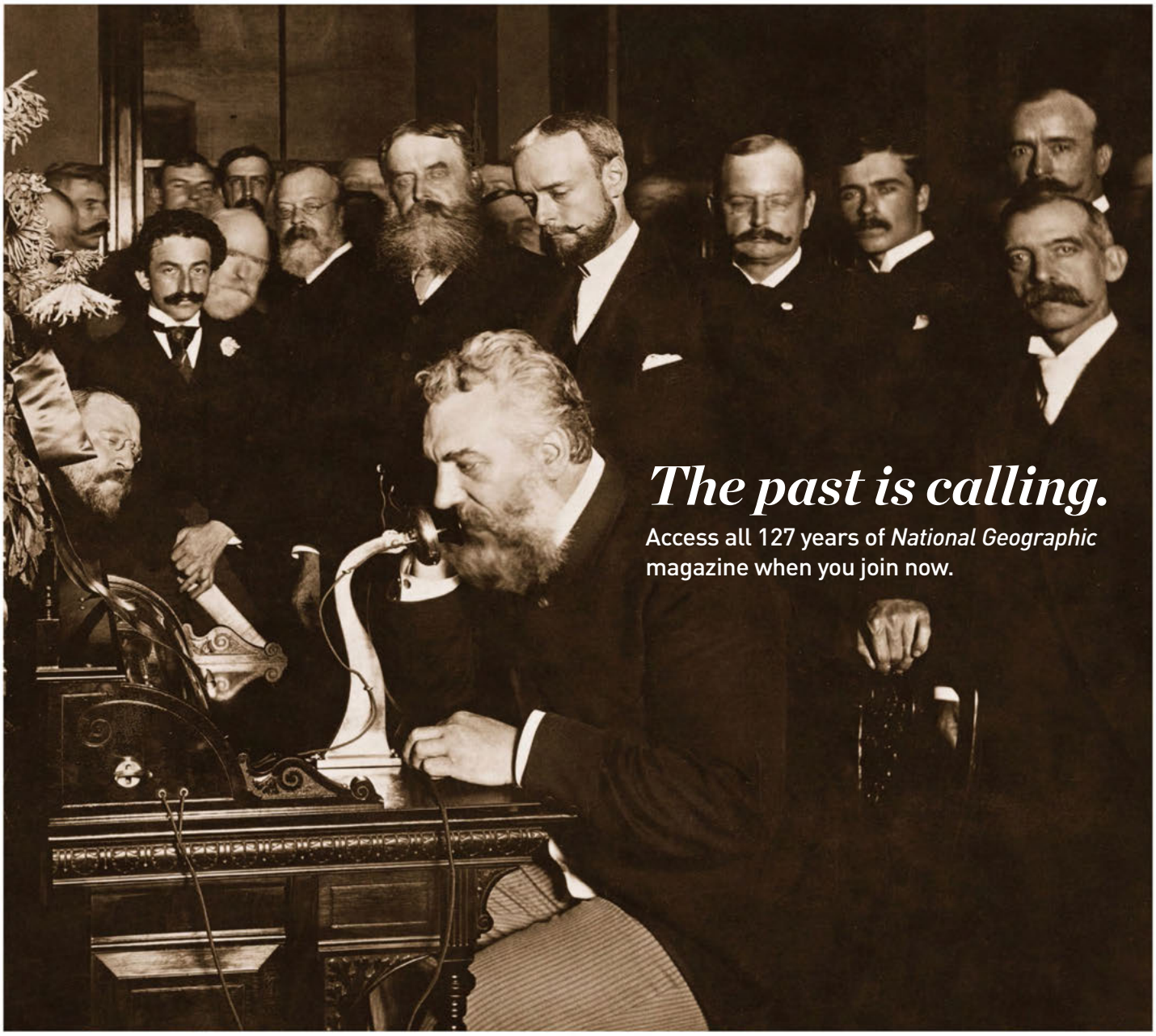
whose work revolutionized field archaeology in the Near East. Kenyon surrounded herself with a large international team and began work on the site. Housing proved challenging and living conditions were crowded and spartan, but it was worth it to work in such a beautiful location.

Kenyon applied a more modern, scientific, and rigorous approach than her predecessors. This included using a grid system developed by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. Instead of digging randomly in likely locations, Kenyon marked out regular grids and as layers of soil were removed, the objects found at each level were carefully recorded. This technique, combined with a greater knowledge of how pottery had developed over time, enabled more precise dating of the finds. Kenyon was also aware that archaeological methods were improving and so she left material for future (and more advanced) digs to explore.

Jericho Unveiled

After seven field seasons Kenyon reconstructed the main periods in Jericho's history, dating the city back to around the eighth millennium B.C. One of her most important finds was a 26-foot high circular defensive tower dated to between 7000 and 8000 B.C. In the Neolithic layers around 7000 B.C. Kenyon found portrait sculptures, plaster modeled over human skulls with shells for eyes, which she connected to Neolithic funeral rites. A similar design was used for two stylized human statues. Comparable finds would later appear in other archaeological sites in the eastern Mediterranean.

However, those who dreamed of finding the walls destroyed by Joshua were disappointed. Kenyon's research showed that during the Middle Bronze Age, around 1900-1550 B.C., a strong defensive system was built around Jericho, but it had probably been destroyed by an earthquake before the Late Bronze Age. There is no evidence that the walls were rebuilt and later besieged by the Israelites. Kenyon herself said that she had found no proof of walls from Joshua's time (1400-1200 B.C.) Furthermore, the city does not appear to have been densely populated again until the Iron Age, around 1200 B.C. Though archaeology and the Bible may disagree about Joshua's walls, Kathleen Kenyon was able to give Jericho one important claim to fame: It's the oldest fortified city found anywhere in the world at that time. —*Felip Masó*



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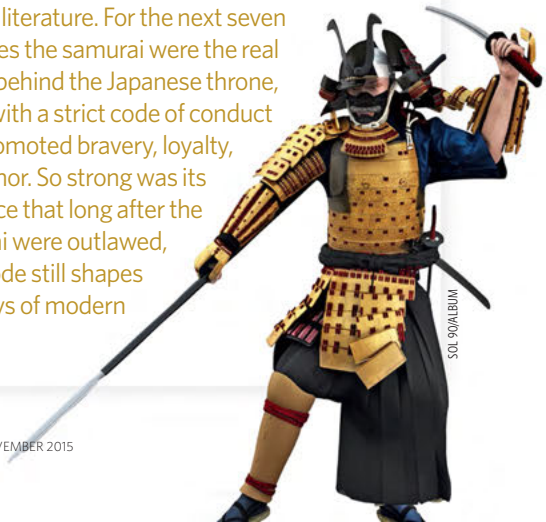
UIG/BRIDGEMAN/ACI

WASHINGTON: THE RELUCTANT PATRIARCH

GEORGE WASHINGTON is a towering figure in history and in many ways the epitome of what would become the American dream. Ambitious beyond his education and standing, his strong qualities earned him both military and political respect, winning him command of the Revolutionary army and later the presidency of the new United States. These were top jobs, which he seems to have both yearned for and yet feared, but which he performed with an ability and duty that has inspired generations.

SAMURAI: THE FEUDAL KNIGHTS OF MEDIEVAL JAPAN

JAPAN'S SAMURAI remain one of the most revered icons of the Asian world. The image of the samurai warrior emerged out of a long civil war between Japan's strongest clans. Their epic struggle was not only pivotal to Japanese history, it also provided a rich source for its art and literature. For the next seven centuries the samurai were the real power behind the Japanese throne, ruling with a strict code of conduct that promoted bravery, loyalty, and honor. So strong was its influence that long after the samurai were outlawed, their code still shapes the ways of modern Japan.



SOL 90/ALBUM

Plundering the Pyramids

Packed with luxurious grave goods, the tombs of Egypt's rulers have long been tempting targets for grave robbers prepared to risk their tunnels, traps, and vengeful gods.

The Bloody End of a Mad Emperor

Caligula was crowned to popular acclaim, but in just four years he'd become a hated man with enemies everywhere. The question soon became how, not if, he would be killed.

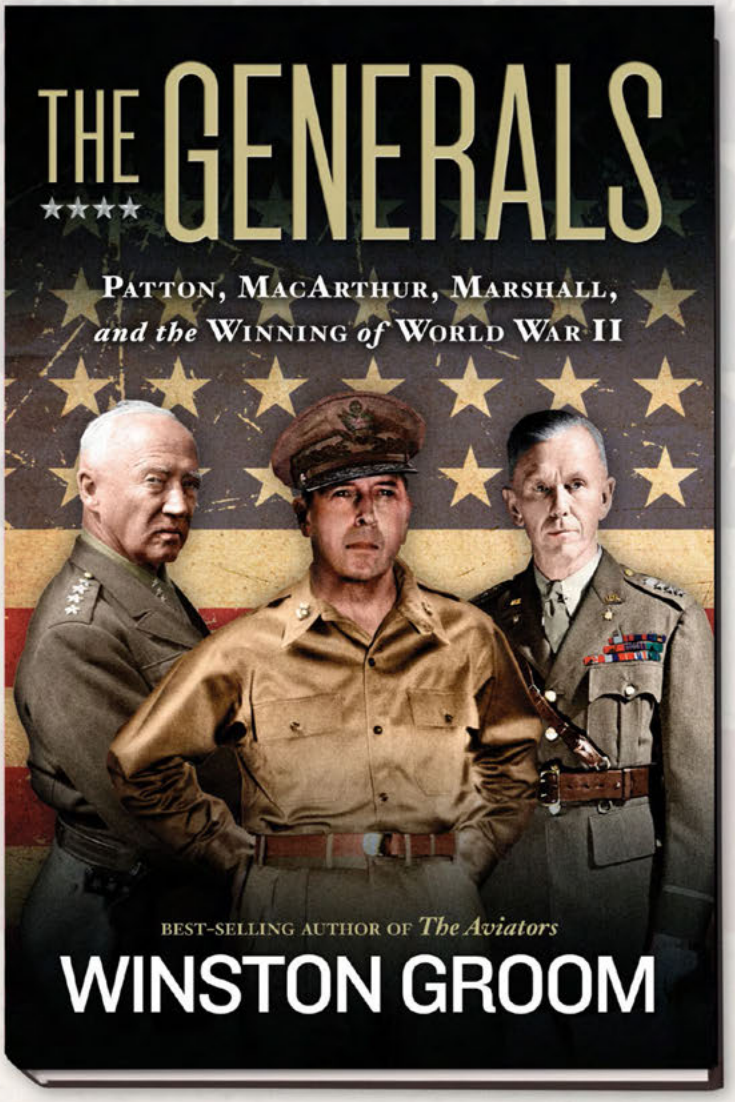
Troy: The Hunt for the Trojan Horse

When Homer told the tale of the Greeks using a wooden horse to trick their way into Troy, he created a much loved masterpiece of literature. But is there any truth to the legend?

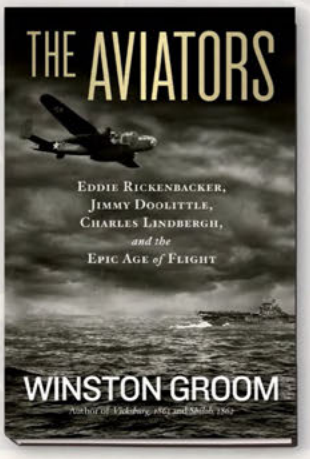
How Europe Welcomed Opium

Seventeenth-century Europeans turned to opium as a panacea. Used for everything from anxiety to asthma, its addictive qualities and side effects were tragically misunderstood.

Winston Groom Turns the Spotlight on
AMERICA'S MOST CELEBRATED HEROES

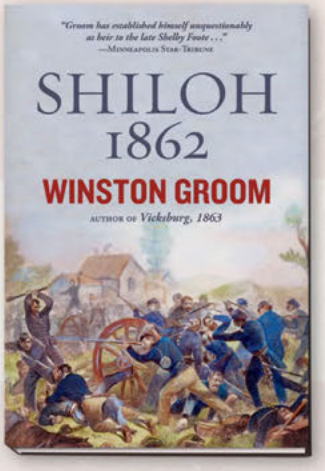


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Groom's gifted storytelling sends us soaring with three brave daredevil pilots who became American heroes during the epic era of flight—Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle, and Charles Lindbergh.

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—WALL STREET JOURNAL



Groom's dramatic, heartrending account of the Civil War's first great battle "will stay with you for a very long time," according to the **WASHINGTON POST.**

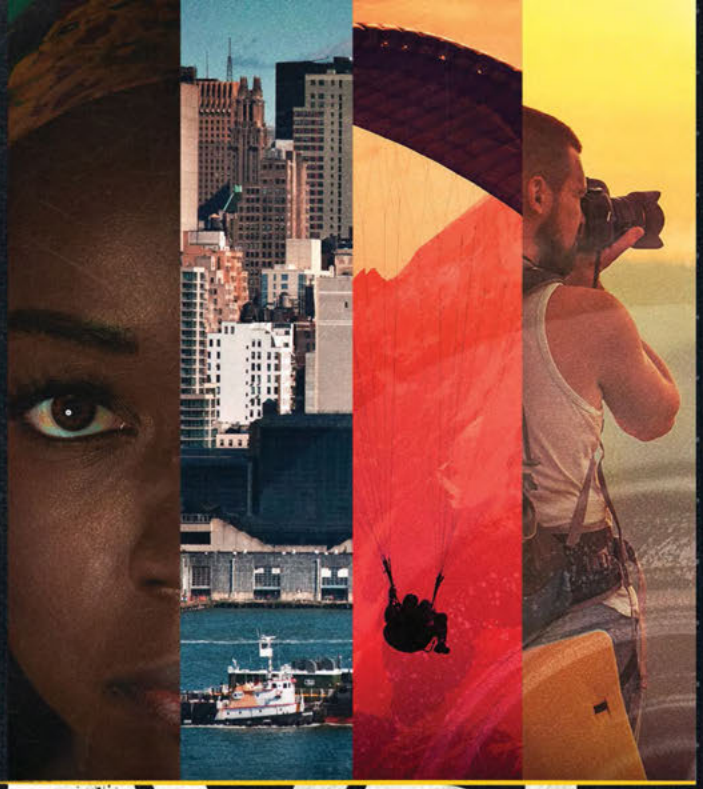
"This thrilling narrative account of Shiloh from the best-selling author of *Forrest Gump,* is a vivid portrayal of key players and epic moments that changed America's understanding of the war."
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